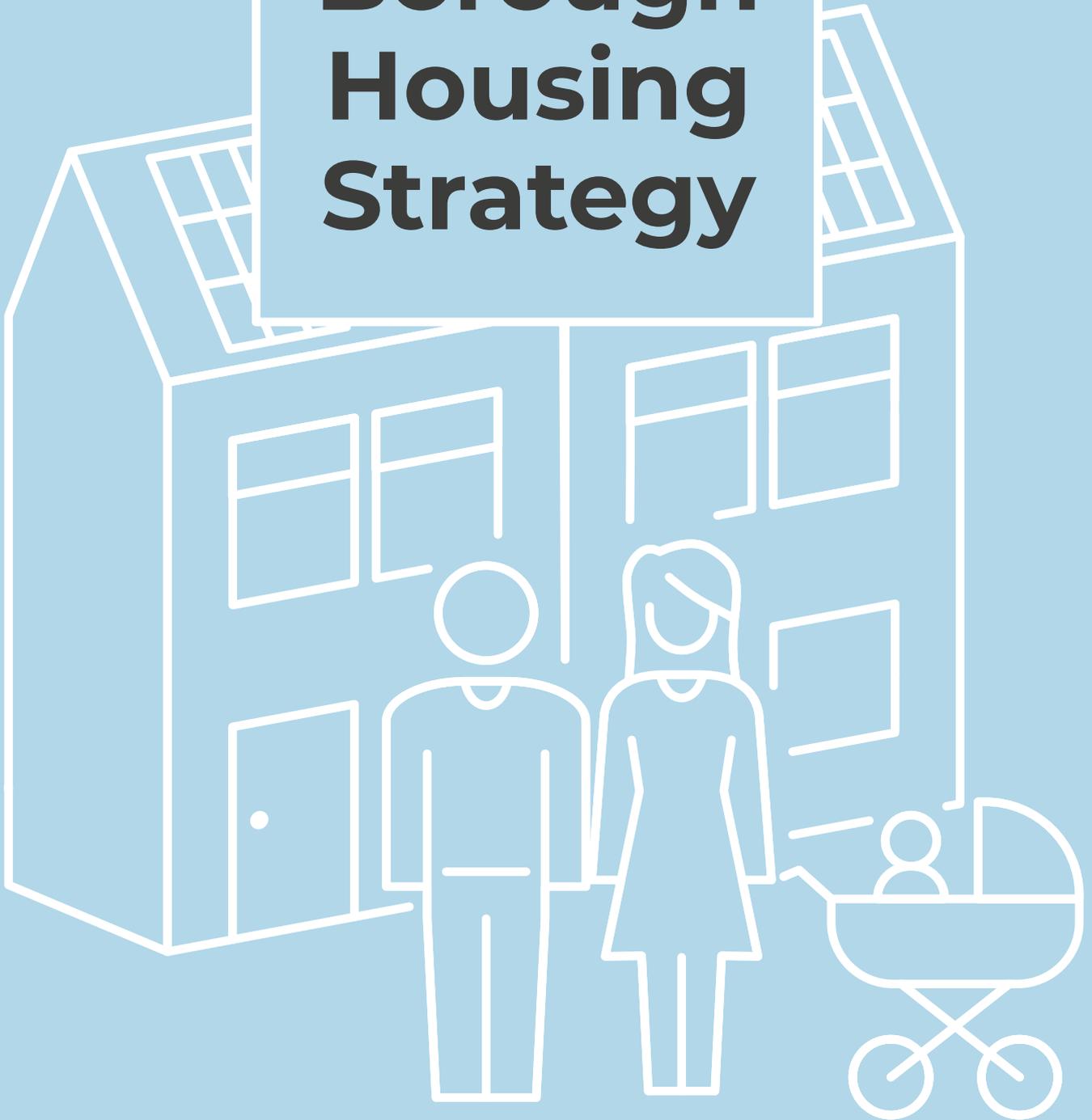
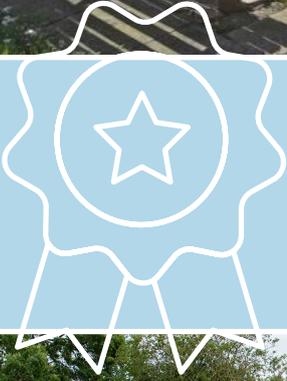
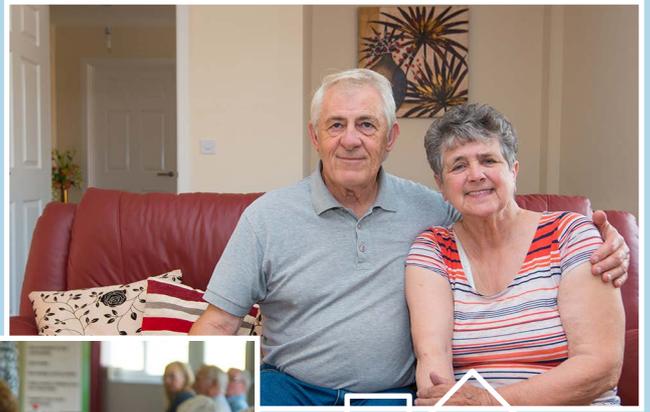
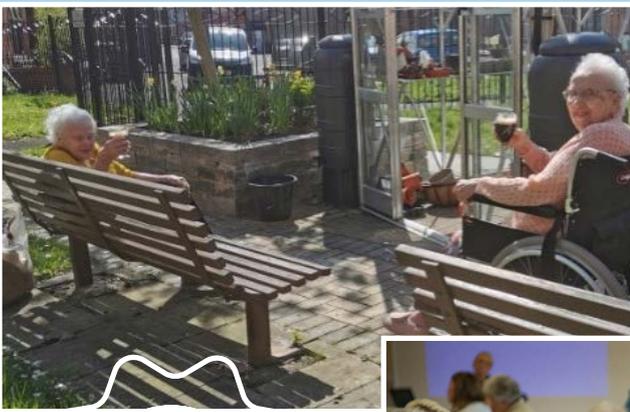


# Wigan Borough Housing Strategy





# Contents

<b>Section 1 – Introduction and scene setting</b>	<b>2</b>
<hr/>	
• <b>1.1</b> The Deal 2030: the beginning and aim of this housing strategy	3
• <b>1.2</b> The Deal and housing	3
• <b>1.3</b> The regional and national context for this housing strategy	5
• <b>1.4</b> Coronavirus; how might it affect this strategy?	6
<b>Section 2 – Proud, challenges and opportunities</b>	<b>8</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Section 3 – Right home, right people, right place</b>	<b>12</b>
<hr/>	
• <b>3.1</b> New homes for Wigan Borough	13
• <b>3.2</b> Making more existing homes ‘right’ for people	27
• <b>3.3</b> Access to the right home in the right place	32
<b>Section 4 – Healthy homes, households, communities and places</b>	<b>38</b>
<hr/>	
• <b>4.1</b> Health homes and households	41
• <b>4.2</b> Healthy communities and places we can be proud of	43
<b>Section 5 – Getting the right support</b>	<b>46</b>
<hr/>	
• <b>5.1</b> Supported living	47
• <b>5.2</b> Preventing and relieving homelessness	48
• <b>5.3</b> Supporting private tenants through better advocacy	49
<b>Section 6 – A revolution in quality low carbon Council homes</b>	<b>50</b>
<hr/>	
• <b>6.1</b> Our approach to delivering low carbon homes	52
• <b>6.2</b> New build homes – towards net zero carbon by 2028	54
• <b>6.3</b> Existing homes – towards carbon neutral by 2038	55
• <b>6.4</b> Accelerating capacity and capability for retrofit	56
• <b>6.5</b> Other actions to achieve net zero carbon homes and places	57



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# Section 1

## The Deal 2030



# Introduction and scene setting



## 1.1 The Deal 2030: the beginning and aim of this housing strategy

The Deal 2030 is our ambitious plan for Wigan Borough. It's a new way of delivering public services and it sets out how staff and residents will work together to create a truly world class place to live in the decade ahead.

This is the first time we have considered – across everything we do in housing – how we will work to the principles of The Deal and what we will do to achieve its aims. We are proud to have gone through this process and to be able to say that we have a housing strategy and action plan that starts with The Deal and that is fully oriented towards achieving its aims.

## 1.2 The Deal and housing

The Big Listening Project identified 10 strategic goals for our borough. One of these is A Home for All. The Deal says that “Together we will: Ensure that everyone in the borough has access to a high quality, affordable home in a happy community with good neighbours”.

Through this strategy we are making it possible for more people to live in a home that is affordable and right for them, in the right place, with good connections and support where necessary.

But we are going further. We are being more ambitious because housing affects many parts of our lives, so this strategy aims to achieve other Deal priorities too.



**This is a strategy for the Council and partners to:**

- Build more of the right homes, creating better housing choices in all parts of the borough
- Make existing homes right for people and families: healthy, suitable and stable homes
- Help people to access a home that is right for them at different stages of life
- Provide the right support to help people to live well in their homes and communities
- Enable people to be healthy and connected, living in healthy homes and places
- Move quickly towards carbon neutral housing across the borough (by 2038)
- Grow the local economy, the Wigan £ through housing-related activity
- Embrace the principles of community wealth building and support the development of co-operatives within our neighbourhoods.



**The Deal: A Home for All**

- Develop high quality, affordable and accessible homes that meet the needs of local residents, including future generations
- Make sure new homes are part of safe and connected local communities with the right local facilities such as GP's, schools and shops
- Ensure we have a good mix of homes for people with disabilities and a range of home ownership options for all ages
- Further improve our work to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and support people to make a success of their new home
- Be a good landlord and complete repairs quickly and to a high standard in our homes

**Supporting other Deal priorities:**

- Best start in life for children and young people (Our People)
- Happy healthy people (Our People)
- Vibrant town centres for all (Our Place)
- An environment to be proud of (Our Place)
- Economic growth that benefits everyone (Our Future)
- A well-connected place (Our Future)
- Community Wealth Building

**“Valued, connected and resilient people, living in the right home, with the right support will be happier, healthier and more independent.”**



**Growing the local economy, boosting the Wigan £, promoting equality of opportunity.**

**Implementing this housing strategy and action plan will support our economic ambitions:**

- Providing a broader range of housing options and a quality ‘place offer’ will help attract people to live in Wigan Borough who can fill skills gaps in our economy, including higher earners
- Building homes that are attractive for young professionals starting out to retain more of our young people and attract others who will power our local economy
- Affordable homes to rent and buy matched to the full range of incomes and aspirations
- Better housing mix in all localities will support mixed income/wealth neighbourhoods
- Attract more business and high quality jobs through better connectivity, more housing choice and quality town centres and environments
- Self-build options enabling younger residents to build their skills-set
- Choose and incentivise housing development partners who work to Community Wealth Building principles; offering good employment opportunities, training and local apprentices in housing developments in the borough
- Procurement of local SME contractors, so that we can draw on their ideas and innovations to deliver Council adaptations, Disabled Facilities Grant-funded works, remodelling and improvements in sheltered schemes – and to increase social value and the Wigan £
- Considering establishing an ‘eco-factory’ (or distribution centre) within the borough to supply the Council’s retrofit programme and that of other Councils
- As we retrofit homes, people are likely to save money on fuel bills giving them more disposal income that they may choose to spend in the local economy

The inherent community wealth building logic of the Wigan Deal has helped to transform the role of the Council into an enabler of the social and solidarity economy.

Over the last few years, we have offered tailored support for Community Interest Companies, seconded staff, and developed funding and support packages to develop ideas and devolution of control of publicly owned land and property.

Community Wealth Building will help form a new iteration of the Wigan Deal, with the building of an inclusive economy at its heart.

## 1.3 The regional and national context for this strategy

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Wigan Council is a core partner at GM level. We have helped to shape the GM Housing Strategy: Doing Housing Differently, and the Implementation Plan which was published in December 2019. We are fully engaged in GM level work on homelessness and rough sleeping and shifts towards net zero carbon housing.

We continue to develop our health and social care service delivery within the context of delivering on the devolution of health and social care. The GM Spatial Framework (GMSF): Homes, Jobs and the Environment continues to evolve and Wigan Council's local plans for housing and other types of development will align with the GMSF once it is published.

*Appendix 1 summarises the Greater Manchester context including the GM Housing Strategy, GM Spatial Framework, GM approach to homelessness and rough sleeping and GM devolution of health and social care.*

*Government policy on housing continues to change and develop. Wigan Council is vigilant to identify opportunities emerging from any policy developments as well as embracing any new requirements.*

*Appendix 2 summarises recent developments in national housing policy.*

## 1.4 Coronavirus; how might it affect this strategy?

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We are living through a one-in-a-hundred-years pandemic that has changed many things about the way we all live and work.

This housing strategy has been conceived in a pre-COVID-19 era to address the issues of that time. Those issues have not gone away, rather the pandemic and the requirements lockdown have both shone a light on housing issues and intensified many of them.

The immediate impact of the virus required a rapid response particularly to bring homeless people into a safe environment but the longer term implications will centre around building back the local economy and supporting people to live well in their homes and communities.

The public's view of hospitals and care homes as safe places has changed and the importance of having a suitable and secure 'home' with people around us who can provide both formal and informal support has been understood in a new way.

Our overall vision for Wigan Borough, the aims of this strategy and many of the elements it contains will not change. Its focus on housing to support the health and build the wealth of Wigan Borough's residents will be even more relevant as we move forward together into the a post-COVID-19 world.

What will change is the priority we give to different parts of this strategy and how we go about delivering the different elements. The timescales will also change: COVID-19 has shown that we can act quickly and we intend to maintain the momentum and work quickly to make Wigan Borough a world class place to live.

At the present time, it is not possible to foresee all the repercussions of Coronavirus nor to be certain about how they will play out. As we get some distance from the onset of the lockdown restrictions, we are getting a clearer picture of the full consequences, including both their scale and ways in which we might act to address them as well as the type and level of government support that might become available.

We will, therefore, take a pragmatic and dynamic approach to the delivery of this strategy, seeking the best way forward and altering our tactics accordingly as needs become clear and policies and practices develop. We are also intending to undertake 12 monthly reviews of the strategy, allowing time for reflection, update and changes to delivery plans as necessary.



### **The consequences of COVID-19**

We are currently undertaking a rapid engagement exercise with Wigan Borough's communities. We are asking residents what has COVID-19 meant for them, the impact it's had and is likely to have going forward and what they think the Council should continue doing. This information will inform our ongoing approach to The Deal.

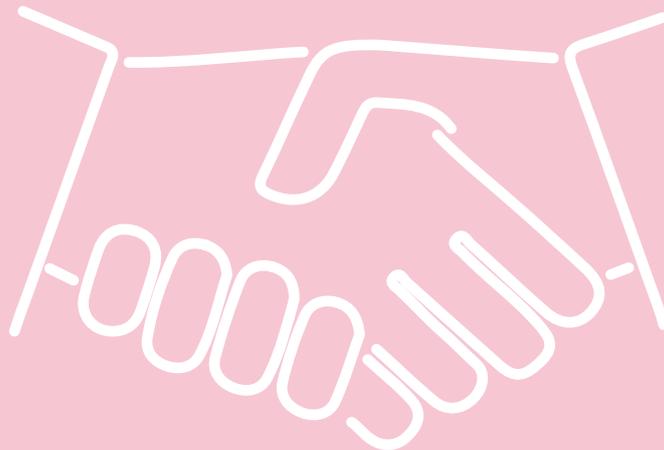
#### **Here are 10 current and anticipated impacts of COVID-19:**

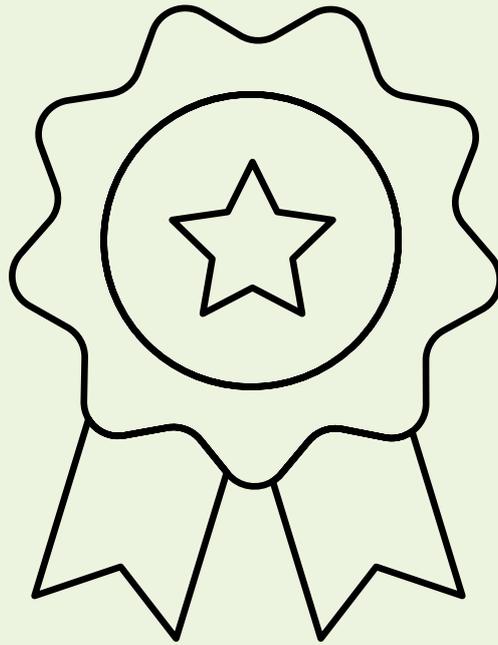
- Increased complexity of people's lives due to the trauma of lockdown leading to higher levels of relationship breakdown with implications for housing and support
- Anticipated increase in mental health problems due to longer term social and economic consequences
- Higher levels of rent arrears on Council properties and increased demand from people needing help with Universal Credit claims
- Stalled housing developments through the lockdown and uncertain recovery due to reduced confidence in the housing market
- Anticipated higher levels of evictions of tenants struggling to afford their rent and consequential increase in new homelessness and rough-sleeping cases
- Reduced appetite for residential care and a greater impetus to look after older people within their own homes supported by natural communities
- The potential for new approaches to addressing homelessness in the long-term (and the limits of this) following the success of the government's 'Everybody In' programme
- The potential for higher levels of community strengthening activity as newly-mobilised residents offer their skills and time to support each other and the potential for the Council to support this
- Impact of social distancing requirements on many areas of service delivery
- Uncertainty over Council finances going forward

A wide range of opportunities to support Community Wealth Building are already outlined in this strategy. They will be even more important now and the Council will make every effort to support local businesses and industries to thrive and develop going forward.

## Section 2

# Proud, challenges and opportunities





## **Proud**

### **We have much to celebrate and be proud of:**

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- Strong political and organisational leadership; a clear vision with Deal 2030
- Integration of the former Wigan & Leigh Homes back into the Council
- Synergy between housing, health & adult social care; our housing for health programme
- Exceeded national targets for new home building scoring 110% in the Government's Housing Delivery Test from 2016-19.
- Our innovative equity loan scheme
- Joining up of our private housing enforcement function
- Direct delivery of 388 new affordable homes by the Council between 2015 and 2020, including through £13m grant secured from Homes England
- Maintaining high levels of new affordable homes of around 300 homes per annum through a mix of direct delivery, RP programmes and S106
- High attendance at biannual private landlord and letting agent forums; 60-70 local landlords/agents in attendance

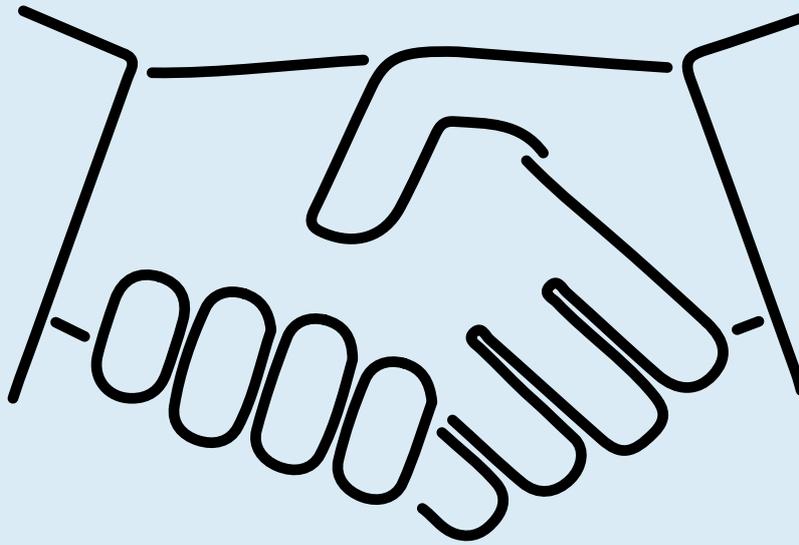


## **Challenges**

**COVID-19 is perhaps the biggest challenge the Council will face in delivering this housing strategy. Other challenges include:**

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- Ageing population
- Unaffordability due to lower than average incomes in Wigan Borough
- Increased demand for Council homes coupled with stock reduction due to Right to Buy
- 1,126 new dwellings required each year to 2037 to meet forecasted demand
- Many sites require expensive remediation especially to the south and east
- Capacity to deliver, including infrastructure and sites
- Imbalance of housing provision across the borough
- Unknown private rented sector stock condition
- Level of investment required to achieve quality, low carbon homes targets



## **Opportunities**

**We intend to make the most of opportunities to deliver this strategy:**

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- Collaborations across Greater Manchester to address challenges across the region
- New jobs generation from infrastructure projects and the shift to low carbon homes
- Alternative models and financial products to make home ownership affordable
- Delivering a better mix and balance of types of homes
- Potential to borrow against our asset-base of 22,000 properties and strength of our Housing Revenue Account
- Equity loans / equity release to support home improvement and low carbon homes
- Ethical lettings agency to improve private renting experience
- Supported sharing options for those who want it
- Town centre improvement through housing development around transport hubs
- Commitment of development partners to achieving Wigan Council's ambitions
- Community Wealth Building

## Section 3

# Right home, right people, right place



**One of the key ambitions that residents have, that we heard through the Big Listening Project, was for more people to be able to find the right home in the right place.**

This request set us on a journey of thinking differently about how we do housing in Wigan Borough. We realised that this is not just about building more homes, nor more affordable homes – important though these things are. It is also about how we help people to access the right home for them, at a price they can afford, and to move on when their home ceases to be suitable any longer. Crucially, it is also about how we make more of our homes ‘right’ so that people can live happy, healthy lives in homes and places they want to live in.

So, we are being more creative than in the past in our effort to enable people to find housing solutions that suit them. Our proposals go way beyond the projected numbers of new homes required. In this strategy, we focus on the dynamics between people at different stages of their lives, the sort of homes they can afford and what they would ideally want, the suitability of homes that are available, the influence our communities can have over what is built where, improving the homes we have, helping people to solve their housing and related problems, how people can be helped to access a home they want and how all this impacts on our local economy.

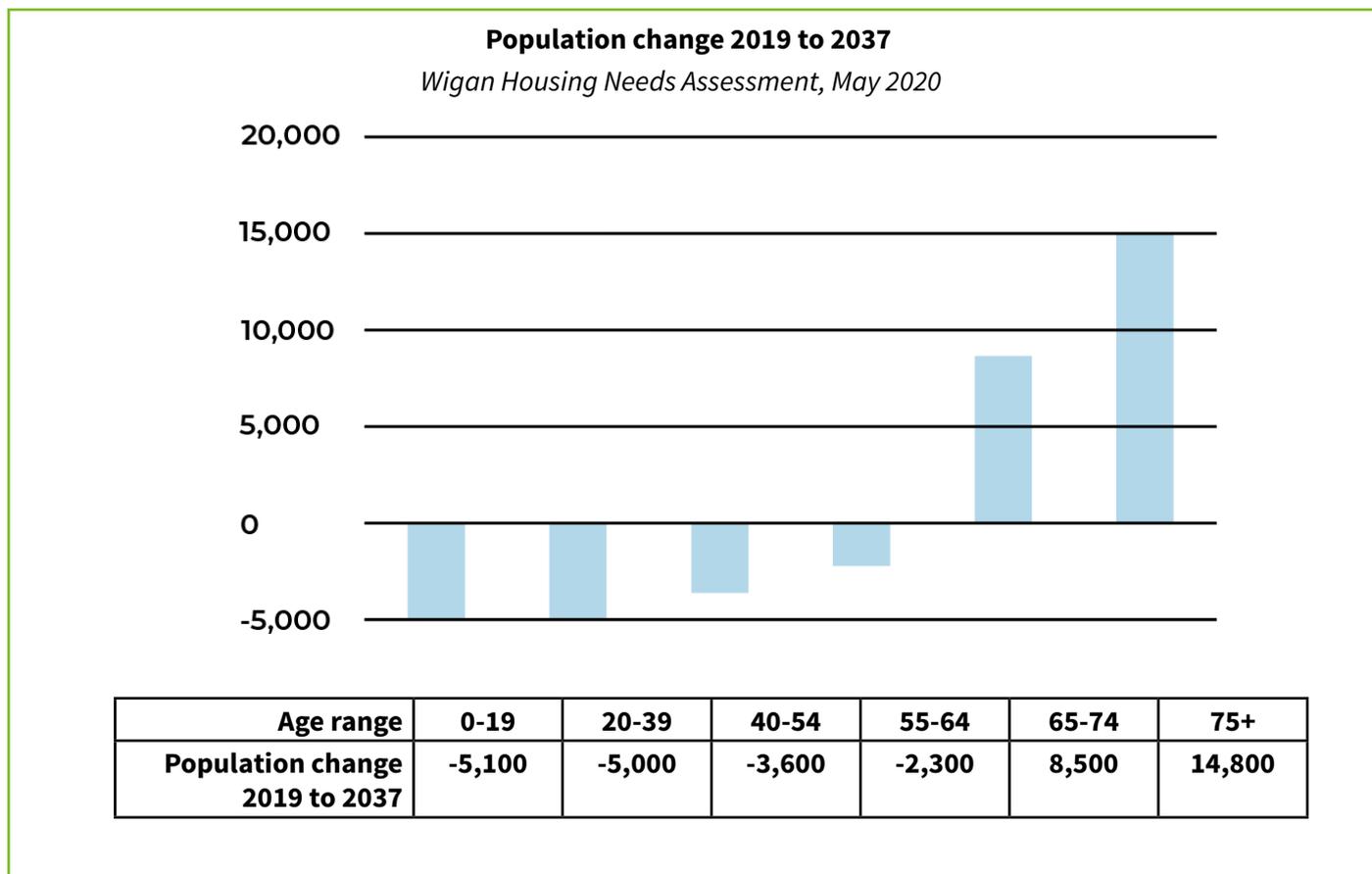
Increasing choices in the housing market is a priority across for Greater Manchester (Priority B3 in the GM Housing Strategy). This sits alongside two further priorities: new models of housing delivery (B1) and investing in truly affordable housing (B2). This section aims to address all of these in a way that works for Wigan Council, partners and residents.

### 3.1 New homes for Wigan Borough

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In 2019 there were 326,300 Wigan Borough residents and by 2037 there are projected to be 333,600 residents, an increase of 2.2%. However, the population aged 65 years and over is expected to increase by almost 37% from 63,100 to 86,400 – more than 23,000 over-65s – over the same period. Our population is ageing and we need to make sure that there are sufficient homes that are suitable and accessible for our growing older population.



There is a risk our younger people could drift away unless ways can be found to attract young people and families to staying living or move to live in the borough. We also need to make sure we can attract the right skills to Wigan Borough to fill gaps in our growing economy that cannot easily be filled by people already living in the borough and this means having a housing and place offer that will attract some high earners.

Part of what attracts people to live in a place, or stops them from moving away, is the type of housing on offer. The location is also important; the neighbourhood needs to be both attractive and accessible, enabling them to get where they need to go.

We have an opportunity over the next 20 years, through the new homes that will be built and through attention to the existing homes and neighbourhoods, to develop a strong ‘housing offer’ that will be suitable, attractive and affordable to our ageing population, to younger people and families and to people who need specialist housing and support to live independently.

If we do this, we will help to keep our population in balance, provide more opportunities for people to access homes they want and support our inclusive economic growth.

## 3.1.2 How many and what sort of homes will we aim to have built for our changing population?

Analyses undertaken for the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework concludes that the minimum local housing need for Wigan Borough is 1,126 dwellings each year to meet needs to 2037. This is higher than the Council's current assessed need of 916 dwellings and housing target of 1,000 dwellings. Over the past five years (2014/15 to 2018/19) an annual average of 857 net new dwellings have been built in the borough and in 2018/19 delivery was above target at 1,350 new homes.

While Wigan Borough's house prices are relatively low compared to surrounding areas, they have become less affordable for residents earning local salaries since 2015.

A significant number of residents would like to buy a home and have sufficient income to sustain the costs of home ownership, but they require support to make the purchase in the first place.

Most people would also want an energy efficient home to help future-proof against rising fuel costs.

Part of the solution to the problem of affordability is to help people to access a home – to rent or to buy – at a price they can afford. 'Access to the right home' is a key aim of this housing strategy. Another part of the solution is to understand what people can realistically afford and influence the supply of those types of housing.

From our Housing Needs Analysis 2020, we have identified 6 'stages of life' for which people typically want different things from their housing.

*Appendix 3* shows what Wigan Borough residents in each stage of life say they would like from their home compared to what they expect and what they can afford. We will take this data on board when deciding what sort of homes we will have built in different locations.

**In addition, we will consider other features that people at different stages of life might consider to be attractive in a new home. For example:**

- **Wigan Borough's young residents seeking independence (16-25)** might be interested in purpose-built shared 'co-living' accommodation, a modern super energy efficient micro-home, supported lodgings with an established household or foyer-style accommodation for 16-21 year olds.
- **Wigan Borough's young professionals (26-39)** might be interested in LiveWork schemes, in purchasing or renting a town-centre apartment or Council owned Build-to-Rent.
- **People looking to settle in Wigan Borough (26-45)** could be interested in purchasing a new key-worker house or apartment, or in a self-build option through which they learn a range of project management and building skills.
- **Wigan Borough's maturing families (35-59)** may prioritise a garage or off-road parking and may want to have a say in the design of their new home. Some could be interested in being part of an 'intentional community, for example a Community Land Trust development or intergenerational cohousing.
- **Wigan Borough's active older people (60-74)** may be looking to downsize to a smaller home that is more manageable, they may be looking to be within reach of a 'sheltered village' or even to be interested in moving with friends into a cohousing scheme they have helped to design.
- **Wigan Borough's more frail older people (75 and over)** may also be looking to downsize and may be more inclined towards a model of extra care within a 'natural community'. They would benefit from Lifetime Homes Standards and may want a safe space to park a buggy.

We will continue to increase our intelligence about what people in each of these six stages of life want from their accommodation – for example through focus groups, talking to existing forums and particular groups, such as our care leavers. We will use this to inform what is built, how we might make more of the borough's homes 'right' and how we will help people to access the right home.

The Wigan Health and Housing Deal reflects Greater Manchester commitment to start well, live well and age well. In relation to older people's housing, the Council is committed to:

- Development of extra care schemes at pace and scale
- Redevelopment of sheltered schemes
- Age friendly general housing offer
- Ambitious programme of aids, adaptations and use of technology
- Linking to care home reform and hospital discharge
- Centre of excellence for dementia
- Fuel poverty scheme
- Enhanced neighbourhood Extra Care schemes
- Age friendly design principles

### Specialist accommodation

The Council also wishes to stimulate a diverse market for care and support offering people a real choice of accommodation and care<sup>1</sup>.

We are developing a Specialist Supported Housing Strategy that will set out our approach to delivering homes for our four key user groups:

- Older People
- Single people with support needs
- People with a learning disability
- People with mental health problems

In completing that strategy we will take on board feedback we receive through consultations with particular groups, such as the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

Some examples of recent specialist housing schemes developed are provided in *Appendix 4*.



### 3.1.3 Where will new homes be built and how will places change?

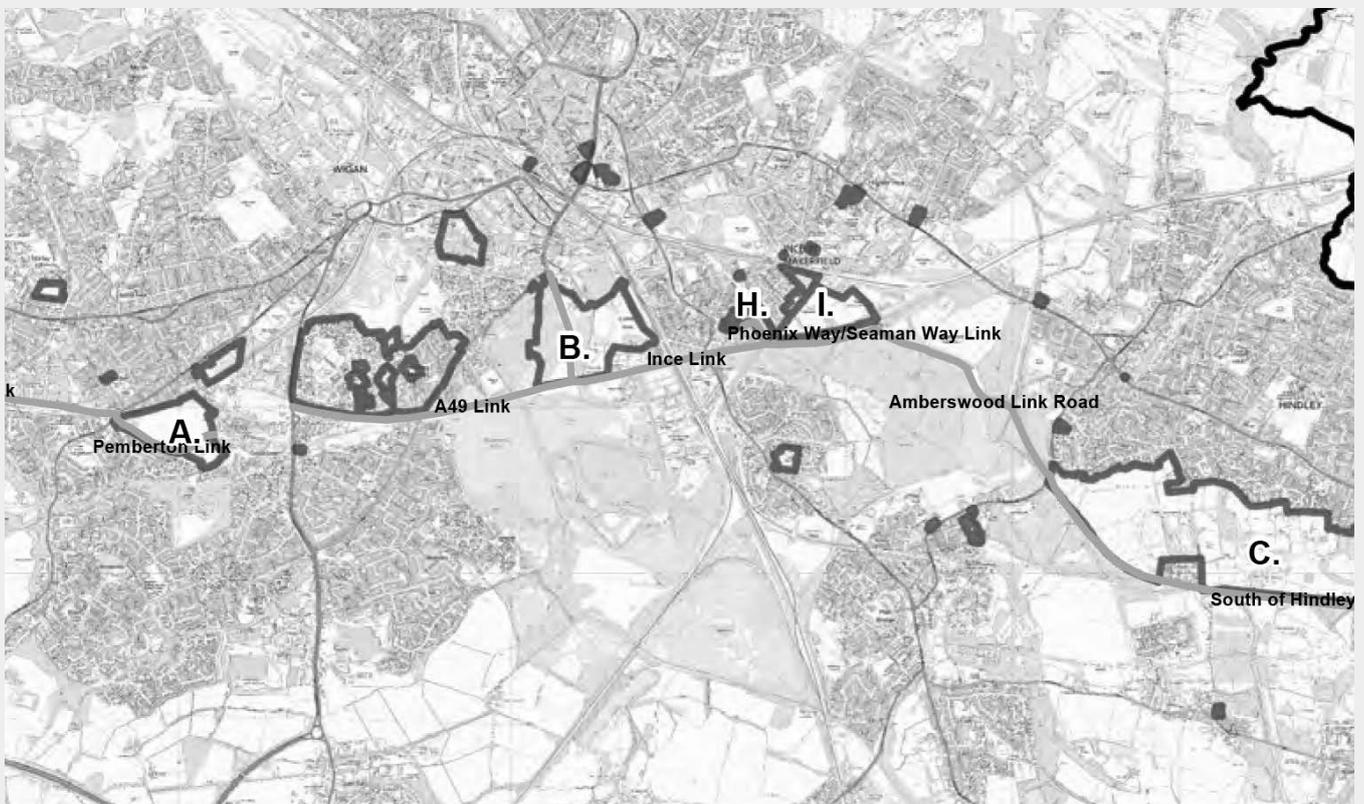
Future housing development will be focused on four main development areas and together these will:

- Improve the quality and diversity of Wigan Borough's residential offer by providing better choices
- Increase the affordability of homes at different price points within the borough
- Support creation of a new town centre offer in each of the 14 town centres
- Favour development on brownfield over greenfield land
- Contribute to meeting wider Greater Manchester housing requirements

#### Area 1: Wigan and Bolton Housing Growth Corridor

Our ambition for the Wigan and Bolton Housing Growth corridor is to create new places. Of the 12,960 new homes proposed over the period to 2037, there are 8,918 are proposed in Wigan Borough with the remaining in Bolton borough. This development will take place alongside a major upgrade in the transport and 'place' infrastructure and improvements to nearby towns which will help to boost the economic potential and bring greater prosperity to residents. Currently, housing delivery in this area is constrained by the lack of capacity in the highway network to just 3,875 homes up to 2033. We are actively exploring several options for investment to unlock the sites so that additional housing capacity of 9,085 homes can be delivered through to 2039.

**Appendix 5** provides a list of the housing sites planned for development in the Bolton-Wigan Growth Corridor.



*Please refer to Appendices for full HIF map*

## Area 2: Three strategic allocations sites identified through the GM Strategic Framework

These include provision for 1,200 new homes north of Mosley Common, 600 new homes at Pocket Nook, 700 new homes west of Gibfield all at appropriate densities for the location. Each of these have been identified as strategic sites due to their proximity to existing or planned bus routes or major roads and the potential for enhanced cycling and walking routes to local stations. Accessibility to Manchester or to other locations (e.g. via the planned HS2) is also a feature.

## Area 3: Wigan Borough's towns

'Our Towns' programme supports local people and communities to create a new 'Town Centre Offer', to feel proud of where they live and play active roles in their community. We want to encourage residents to create a progressive vision for each town building on its distinctive character. Many of our town centres need more homes to make them properly viable and would benefit from new inexpensive housing with infrastructure to help create lively and inclusive living and entertainment centres close to public transport links. We intend to plan the housing development sensitively and with the input from residents.



## Area 4: Council-owned land in locations across the borough

New homes are earmarked for development on several sites across the borough including Etherstone Street in Leigh, Hyndelle in Hindley, Ullswater Road in Golborne, Walkden House in Bryn, Bentink Street in Goose Green, Longridge Avenue and Almond Brook Road in Standish, Wharfdale in Leigh, Sandalwood Drive in Beech Hill and Railway Arches in Leigh.

**Appendix 6** provides a list of new homes that will be built directly by the Council through the current HRA programme to 2022.

In addition to these sites, the Council has either recently sold or is in the process of selling a number of other sites for development of a mix of new homes by private developers. These include: Worsley Mesnes Regeneration Area, Westleigh Waterfront, Former Abraham Guest, Orrell, Northleigh Park, Westwood Park, Phoenix Way, Christopher Street.

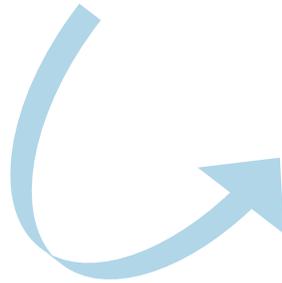


### 3.1.4 How will we influence what sort of homes are built where?

There is currently an imbalance of house types, tenures and sizes across the borough. This will have an impact on people's choices and views on remaining to live in the borough.

#### **The Problem: there is an imbalance in housing**

For example, in Leigh, Tyldesley and Astley over 2/3 of all homes are 3 bedroom houses while there are very few 1 and 2-bedroom dwellings (apart from bungalows). This contrasts with Ashton-in-Makerfield and Bryn where there 12% of all homes are 1-bedroom houses and there are roughly equal numbers of 2 and 3 bed homes.



24% of people said they were unable to move because they lack the type of dwelling that they want.  
Source: Household Survey 2019

Overall, we want to create a better mix of housing across all parts of the borough so that there is more choice for residents of all ages to buy or to rent a home in a place they want to live. We also have an opportunity, within the Our Town programme, to consider carefully what type of housing each town/location requires.

#### **Ways in which we can influence what homes are built and where?**

The Council can exert some influence over what homes are built where:

- By having a strong, persuasive vision for Wigan Borough and for housing to support that vision
- Being clear to developers about what we want built in which locations
- Through the planning process supported by a strong vision, good evidence and aligning planning consents to its strategic vision
- Through negotiations with developers and registered housing providers
- By providing incentives and 'gap funding' to make sites viable or to pay for enhancements to the public realm in new build areas.

We have more influence when we enter delivery partnerships with developers or registered providers. The increased influence comes with increased risk that can be partly mitigated through choice of the right partners and well negotiated contractual agreements.

The Council has direct control over the types of homes we build ourselves.

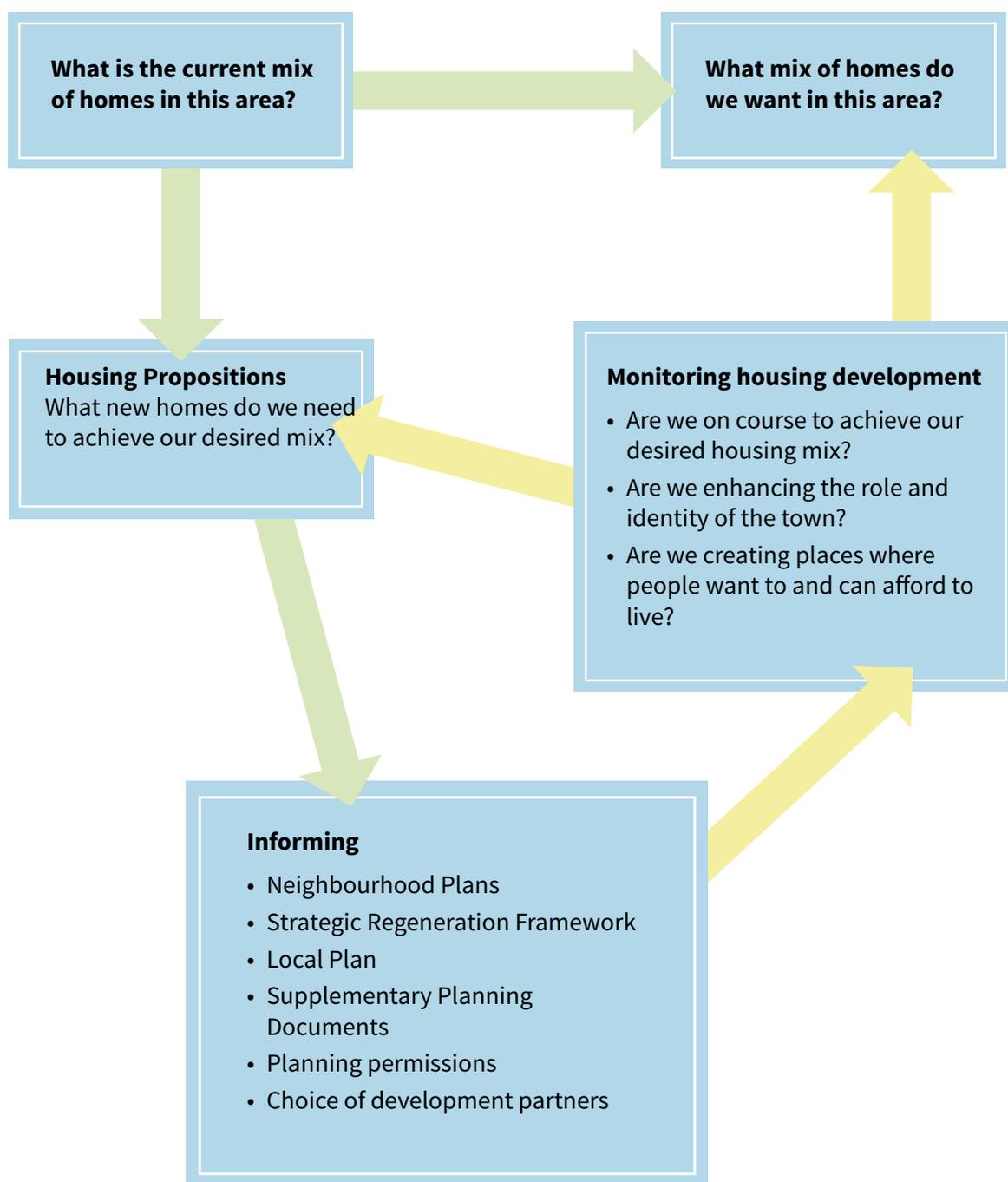
## 'Housing Propositions' to guide and influence what is built where

To increase our influence over what is built in different places across the borough, we will draw up a series of 'Housing Propositions'.

These propositions will identify the size, type, affordability and tenure of new homes – and how many of each – that are required to balance up and provide the right mix of homes overall to support the vision for each place, informed by the 2020 Housing Needs Assessment. They will also potentially include details of the numbers of new homes needed to be built to specific housing standards to make more homes suitable for particular groups.

The Housing Propositions will take account of broad issues around viability of delivering the planned mix and will inform how the Council and partners may be able to support delivery. They will also inform what sort of homes the Council itself intends to develop as part of the direct delivery programme in each area.

These plans will aid discussions with housing developers and relevant stakeholders and, alongside the 2020 Housing Needs Assessments, they will help to contribute to the evidence base of our future planning policy documents which could include Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, Neighbourhood Plans (drawn up by residents) and the suite of Local Plan documents for the borough that will be subject to future consultation.



### 3.1.5 Delivering the new homes to achieve our ambitions

The Council is committed to growing and influencing Wigan Borough's housing market to support the wider vision for the borough: for more of Wigan Borough's residents to access the right home, in the right place, at the right time, with the right support where necessary. This will require delivery of new homes to rent and purchase at a broader range of affordability 'price-points' than in the past to meet previously unmet aspirations of Wigan Borough's residents and to attract the right people to grow Wigan Borough's economy.

The large majority of new homes will be built by developers and registered housing providers with the Council playing a critical role in enabling to influence building of the right types and in the right places.

Wigan Council already has a highly successful direct delivery programme through which we are building significant numbers of affordable homes each year on Council-owned land. In addition, we can demonstrate strong recent delivery of affordable homes through the planning system, secured by Section 106 agreements.

One of our biggest challenges will be in enabling the shift to development on brownfield sites. Many sites we have earmarked for housing are not attractive to developers because the cost of remediating the sites, following past industrial uses, is too high compared to the price people will be prepared to pay for the new homes. The infrastructure required to develop attractive and functional places on large sites is also costly. Another challenge will be how well the construction industry can recover from the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions coupled with ongoing uncertainty in the industry and housing market.

As a Council, we will upgrade our approach to addressing the issue of viability to enable house building and high-quality place shaping to develop the housing market. We will consider the role for new delivery vehicles and a wide range of approaches and tools to support our partners, on a site-by-site basis, to deliver both the numbers and the range of types of home required.

#### **Wigan Council's Direct Delivery programme**

During 2019-20 we completed 60 new Council homes for rent on Council-owned land and have a further 113 on site due for completion in 2020/21. Schemes are financed through borrowing against our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and supported by funding from Homes England. There is was a mix of general needs and specialised homes at affordable rents.

We expect the completions to increase to 137 in 2021/22 and plans are being developed to continue the programme from 2022 with a pipeline of land for 700 new Council homes to 2025.



## Delivery through Section 106 agreements

The delivery of affordable housing through the section 106 process has been used to deliver much needed affordable homes and to strengthen neighbourhoods and communities across the borough. In the year 2019/20 over 60% (232 units) of the total affordable housing delivery (369 units) was from S106 schemes. Over a slightly longer period we secured 99 high quality affordable homes – a mix of rented and shared ownership – on new developments in Standish, an area with one of the highest affordability ratios in the borough. We also secured 66 in Lowton, 63 in Leigh, 56 in Tydesley and 26 in Golborne. All these are now owned and managed by our registered provider partners. We are improving our section 106 process further to maximise opportunities for jobs and training and to make the process more transparent and efficient and to optimise use of commuted sums.



## Greater Manchester Combined Authority Housing Investment Loan Fund

Wigan Council supports and promotes the GM Housing Investment Loan Fund which provides a £300 million revolving pot to accelerate the delivery of private sector-led development of new homes. So far, 38 new homes have been built through this fund including in Harvey Street in Ince, Hilda Street in Westleigh, Rectory Gardens in Aspull and Wigan Pier.

### Exploring delivery vehicles

We are considering a range of delivery vehicles to enable the Council to exert a bigger influence over what is built to move closer to our vision.

#### These include:

**A Local Housing Company:** wholly or partly owned by the Council to develop, purchase and manage homes outside of regulations that apply to homes developed through the HRA. Through this the Council could buy land and build homes for sale and rent at a range of price-points; the surpluses from market sales and rents would be cross-subsidised to provide affordable homes that would not be subject to the Right to Buy. This activity would help to increase the number of homes of all types and the affordable homes built would be additional to those developed through direct delivery through the HRA.

**Joint Venture:** a new business or legal agreement between the Council and a development partner. Each generally has an expertise, assets or needs that are central to the development and success of the new business. Either party may provide land, capital, intellectual property, experienced staff, equipment or any other form of asset. The contractual agreement that is negotiated provides the basis for sharing resources, development risk, benefits and assets they create together.

The Council has some experience of joint ventures and will continue to develop its approach on a site by site basis, learning from the experiences of others.

## Influencing development partners: improving viability, achieving the vision

The Council will take action in partnership with developers, including SME developers, registered housing providers, GMCA, Homes England and others, to support viable developer returns at the same time as meeting net zero carbon standards for new homes (see section 6). Our actions to improve town centres and private housing, including empty homes and the private rented sector, will also help to increase developer confidence (sections 3.2 and 4.1).

### Developer engagement, support and signposting

# Developer Hub

## Plan It. Fund It. Build It.



### How can we support you?

Find out how we can help you bring your development plan to life



### Why develop in Wigan?

What Wigan has to offer and the exciting investment opportunities on the horizon



### Get planning approval

Take a look at our simple guide to help you navigate the planning system



### Where can I find land?

Where to find suitable land or property for your housing development



### Get funding

Funding for you to kick start your residential development plan



### Networking and events

Meet other small-scale developers, share best practice and get advice from industry experts

We provide a range of support and advice for housing developers and registered providers including data on housing need and demand, site intelligence and analysis, introductions to partners and assistance to resolve any issues/barriers developers are facing. We signpost to relevant Council services and functions as well as funding sources such as the GM Housing Investment Fund.

**The Developer Hub** is a new online tool to help developers of all types navigate and understand the housing development process in Wigan Borough. It is designed to guide developers through barriers they may experience, providing clear, concise and relevant information so that the development journey is as simple and straightforward as possible. Wigan Council remain proactive in updating the hub with key information and advice, including latest funding and land opportunities.

Our **Small Developer's Forum** offers small-scale developers who are looking for opportunities to develop in Wigan Borough with a network of developers and experts from across the housing sector for sharing experiences, ideas, information and best practice, influencing the Council's policies and promoting the sector. Through these meetings, small developers can also access expert advice and signposting from Wigan Council's housing, development management, planning policy teams.

## **Influencing through land assembly**

- Provide clarity on land value: use NPPF ‘benchmark land value’ to help avoid developers over-paying for land
- Packaging sites: challenging sites brought forward with viable sites enabling cross-subsidy by a single developer
- Invest in site remediation: in partnership with GM Local Enterprise Partnership
- Best use of public land: work with One Public Estate to secure buy-in to a more collaborative approach to use of public sector land from other statutory bodies such as health trusts, education authority
- Identify sites for Council acquisition: where this would facilitate rapid or more innovative development than might otherwise be the case.

## **Influencing through strategic financing**

- Create a Wigan Borough Housing Fund: drawn from a range of sources including s106 commuted sums, could be used flexibly to address site-specific viability issues e.g. equity stakes, developer loans or gap funding (compliant with State Aid regulations)
- New funding possibilities: Explore the potential for establishing a ‘GM housing deal’ with GM, Homes England and MHCLG
- Identify sources and bid for infrastructure funding: where they help Wigan Borough achieve its aims e.g. the Large Local Majors Scheme
- Maximise niche funding opportunities: for example for self-build or community-led housing to support a small but potentially growing appetite among Wigan Borough residents

## **Increasing developer certainty**

- Up-front investment: on sites to create a development platform for the market
- Cash-flow support: support home sales (see sections 3.3.1) and defer payment for Council land until housing sales complete.
- Streamlining: facilitate dialog between private developers/registered providers to enable affordable housing delivery
- Pre-application discussions: Proactive work with developers to speed up complex planning application processes

## **Revising approach to planning obligations**

- Revise Supplementary Planning Guidance for s106 sites: to embrace the ambitions set out in this strategy
- Negotiate broader range of ‘affordable’ homes: including a blend of social rents, affordable rent, discounted market sale, shared equity products, rent to buy, shared ownership, deposit products – in line with the Housing Plan for the area.
- Undertake viability appraisals on all large sites; to clarify negotiating position.
- Commuted sums: transfer to the Wigan Borough Housing Fund to increase the Council’s capacity to support viability on other sites

## **Being ready for future National and Greater Manchester opportunities**

Homes England periodically updates the types of funding and support it makes available to Councils and registered providers and the conditions of that support. Specific funds usually last for a finite period. We want to be always looking ahead and prepared, with schemes ready to be developed, so that we can bid for gap funding from these funds as well as other sources such as at Greater Manchester level to enable development to go ahead.

We will also explore and look to make use of any new government-led initiatives to maintain house building and infrastructure projects through and following the pandemic.

## Developing our relationships with registered providers and SME developers

We see our local developers and registered housing providers as valuable assets and want to work in partnership with them to engender support for the ambitions set out in this strategy and the Deal 2030.

*Appendix 7 provides a selection of recent schemes developed by our registered provider partners.*

### New build contractor framework

In 2019 Wigan Council appointed eight North West based contractors to a new framework for the construction of new homes with a total value of £60m. Each contractor can apply for individual projects within six lots within the framework as they come forward up to 2023.

Wigan Council support the Greater Manchester Social Value Policy and want investment through the framework to provide added value and to maximise impact upon the local economy, including providing opportunities for local businesses and developing a skilled construction labour force.

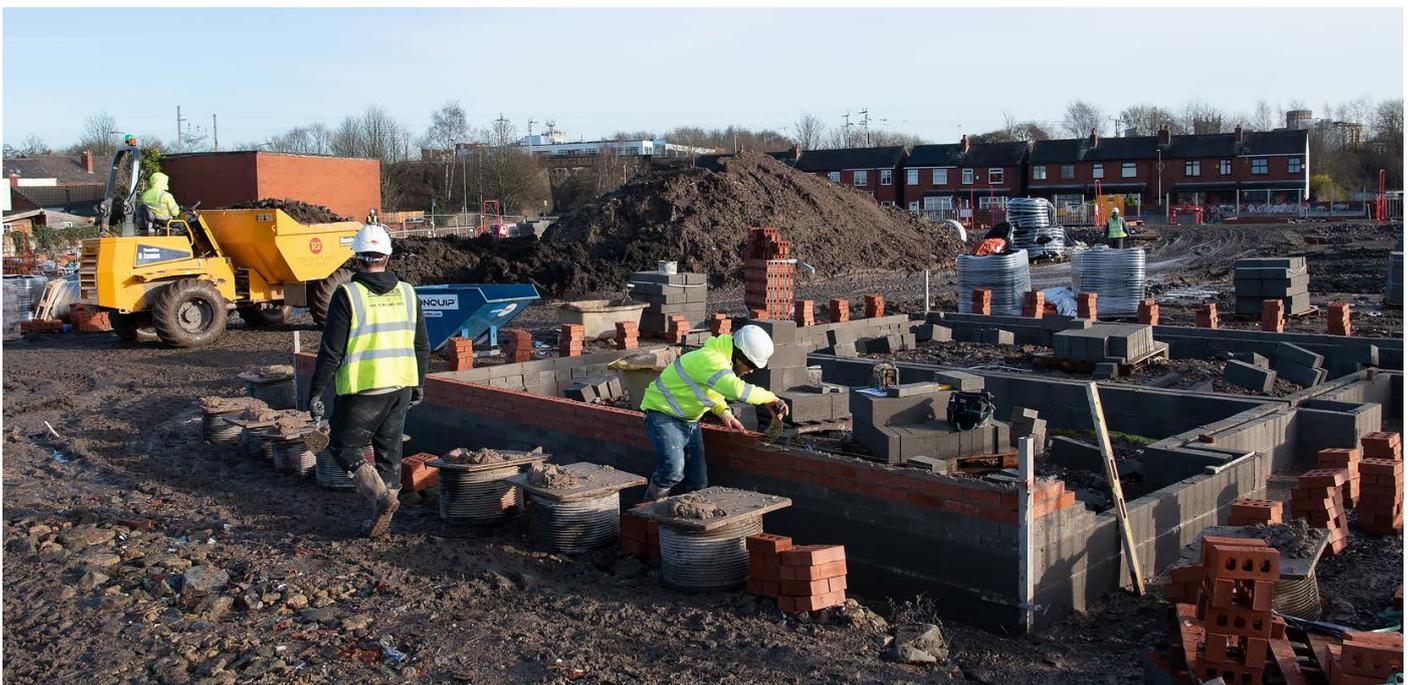
A launch event in September 2019 brought together all eight contractors with 35 local suppliers of construction related products and services and representatives of Council teams in Growth and Housing, Skills and Business Engagement to support new local business opportunities via the framework.

We know that each registered provider has different capacities, capabilities and strengths - some have the development capacity to build large numbers of new homes while others have innovated and developed specialisms in care and support, or in building cohesive neighbourhoods.

We also want to provide opportunities for local small and medium sized housebuilders and developers who are committed to playing a positive role in achieving our housing ambitions and employing and developing local people within their businesses, to submit and win contracts with Wigan Council and partners.

Going forward, we will continue to actively manage relationships with registered housing providers and SME developers taking a strategic approach to ensure we better deliver a wide range of benefits for the borough.

We will seek to agree with key partners how they will contribute to meeting our priorities drawing on particular strengths in support of the ambitions and targets set out in this strategy and to identify ways in which the Council may support partners to achieve the ambitions of this housing strategy.



## **Build to Rent: a new model for increasing housing supply**

We want to explore whether Build to Rent could help to increase provision of the right sort of homes at a high quality and whether this could have a positive impact on standards in private renting more generally.

Purpose-built private rented apartment-style accommodation can be popular in town centres where there are good transport links. Having a single owner and property management company offers some advantages over building new homes for purchase by individual households. Some models can help to meet an identified and specific need as rental accommodation at up to 20% below market rents.

As well as increasing the supply of housing, building to rent:

- provides better, more professional management standards and better-quality homes than much of the mainstream Private Rented Sector
- offers tenants longer-term tenancies and more certainty over long-term availability
- attracts investment into the housing market that accelerates delivery on individual sites, quickly increasing supply and allow 'tricky' sites to be developed can secure stronger commitment to, and investment in, place-making
- delivers more readily across the housing market cycle as this model is less impacted by house price downturns
- provides a more consistent and at-scale demand for off-site manufacture
- could provide the local authority with an opportunity to generate a long-term income stream to invest in local priorities (depending on the model)

We will undertake further work to explore whether a Build to Rent model would be appropriate and if so, in which locations.

## **3.2 Making more existing homes 'right' for people**

Most of the homes Wigan Borough residents will be living in, in 2037, already exist. Many people are living in the 'right' homes but in too many instances people are putting up with homes that are not really suitable for them.

We are putting effort into making more of Wigan Borough's existing homes and communities 'right' for more people. This theme is continued in section 3.3 which focuses on providing better access to the right homes, and in Section 4 that considers how to address unhealthy homes as part of a broader focus on health and wellbeing.

*Improving Council homes*

*Right homes and community connections  
for new Council tenants*

*Improving the private renting offer and  
perception*

*Bringing empty homes into use*

*The 'right' home for people who need support to live well*

## 3.2.1 Improving Council homes

Our recently completed stock condition survey estimates a forecast investment requirement of £1.6bn over 30 years to 2050 across the Council's housing stock.

### **Strategic objectives for investment in Council Homes**

- Maintain our homes at a minimum Decent Homes standard and ensure they are safe
- Reduce fuel poverty and environmental impact (take steps towards low carbon homes)
- Provide value for money through joined up, planned, strategic approach to investment
- Invest in our homes in a way that offers value and supports wider strategic objectives
- Maintain high quality stock data to inform our investment requirements and risks
- Listen and respond to our customers' needs and aspirations for high quality homes

*Wigan Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2020-25*

### **The Wigan Borough Standard to drive improvements**

Applying a new Wigan Borough Standard to our housing stock will establish a 'fabric first' approach to energy efficiency and reducing the carbon footprint in new and existing homes. By standardising specifications and prioritising local sourcing of components we will secure economies of scale, reduce the impact on the environment and maximise local trade.

We are improving insulation and moving towards more energy efficient, low carbon energy sources in homes. The Council has already delivered several 'green technology' projects including installing air source heating systems and photovoltaic solar panels in some stock.

The Wigan Borough Standard will consider future proofing the design of new stock to make it easier and cheaper to retrofit adaptations in the future.

Section 6 sets out our approach to low carbon homes more fully.

### **Health and safety and improved powers of redress**

The Council has consulted residents and drawn up plans to install sprinklers into high rise flats and is currently awaiting recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry before making the final decision on how to proceed. Other fire safety measures are being adopted within the current programme of improvements.

We will also take account of the outcomes of the proposed Social Housing White Paper to set out further measures to "empower tenants and support the continued supply of social homes". This will include review of our tenants scrutiny arrangements and measures to provide greater redress, better regulation and improve the quality of social housing.

## 3.2.2 Right homes and community connections for new Council tenants

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We will review and upgrade the process for re-letting our Council homes. We want to offer greater flexibility in the works we undertake to void properties ahead of new lettings. We will consider offering incoming tenants a choice about the level of works and decoration we undertake and the speed of sign-up where this aligns with our planned maintenance programme.

We also want to help new tenants to settle well into their new homes and communities. We are talking to the Community Centres in each town to explore how they might help new tenants to make connections with the wider community. Where members of the household are not yet registered with a GP, a local school or other key services we will help them to make the connection and become registered.

## 3.2.3 Improving the private renting offer and perception

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The private rented sector can be a great asset, providing decent homes for a range of people.

Wigan Council's approach is to encourage and support private landlords to do a good job at the same time as supporting private tenants and helping them to make good choices. The Build to Rent programme we are considering will also help to drive up standards and improve perceptions (see section 3.1.5). Making a positive difference to the lives of private tenants is also a priority across Greater Manchester (Strategic Priority A2 in the GM Housing Strategy) and Wigan Council will continue to influence the approach at the GM level.

### **Our support and advice for landlords and letting agents**

We hold *biannual forums* to inform landlords and agents on latest developments governing the PRS such as legislative changes, benefit updates and the Council's latest offers and incentives. Regular *working groups* provide an opportunity to explore and resolve issues and ways to strengthen partnership working. To reach a wider group with a wide range of information we also issue quarterly *newsletters*, send regular *email bulletins*. We also publish a range of information and guidance about landlord duties and tenancy management on the Council's website and offer direct communication with the Council team.

### **Our support for private tenants**

Our *Bond Scheme* is available to households to whom the Council has a statutory duty through homelessness legislation and who are unable to raise the funds for a rental deposit. This scheme is currently being reviewed and improved.

We employ two *Private Rented Sector Support Officers* to help PRS renters manage their tenancy and set up bills/pay their rent, and can liaise/negotiate with the landlord if any issues arise. The team supports tenants who are facing or at risk of landlord harassment and illegal eviction, providing advice and liaising with the landlord to make them aware of their legal responsibilities. We make referrals to the Citizen's Advice Bureau where appropriate. We provide general guidance on tenant rights/responsibilities through the Council's website and through direct communication with the Council team.

### **Landlord accreditation**

To further encourage good management in the sector we intend to introduce an Accreditation Scheme for landlords and homes that are up to standard. Initially, we will engage with the Greater Manchester Good Landlord Model being developed and will work with Wigan Borough's landlords and tenants to make it work well locally. This will help prospective tenants to know which are the good condition and well managed properties and should help to drive up standards.

## **A Deal with Private Landlords and Tenants**

We are developing a three-way 'Deal with Private Landlords and Tenants' with input from local landlords and private tenants. This Deal will set out what the Council will do, what we expect landlords to do to maintain high quality homes and management practices and what might be expected of private tenants. This will include a liaison service to help improve relationships between landlords and tenants when these become strained.

We will invite individual landlords and tenants to sign the deal as a route to a range of incentives such as low-interest loans, the Deposit Bond Scheme, enhanced landlord and tenant Support, reduced fees for HMO licensing and Selective Licensing (should we adopt this scheme).

### **An Ethical Lettings Agency: bringing homes up to standard and back into use**

Wigan Council is part of a Greater Manchester initiative to establish a new Ethical Lettings Agency to raise property and management standards and secure more quality homes to meet housing needs.

#### **Benefits to Wigan Borough's private landlords**

- Ability to rent a residential property easily through a lease arrangement for a period of 5 years
- Hassle-free lettings, managed by the Council
- Property inspected and guidance/support provided to bring up to standard
- All repairs carried out, the property is maintained at a good standard
- Reduced risk: guaranteed rent, no void loss
- No repair/safety check costs

#### **Benefits to Wigan Borough's renters**

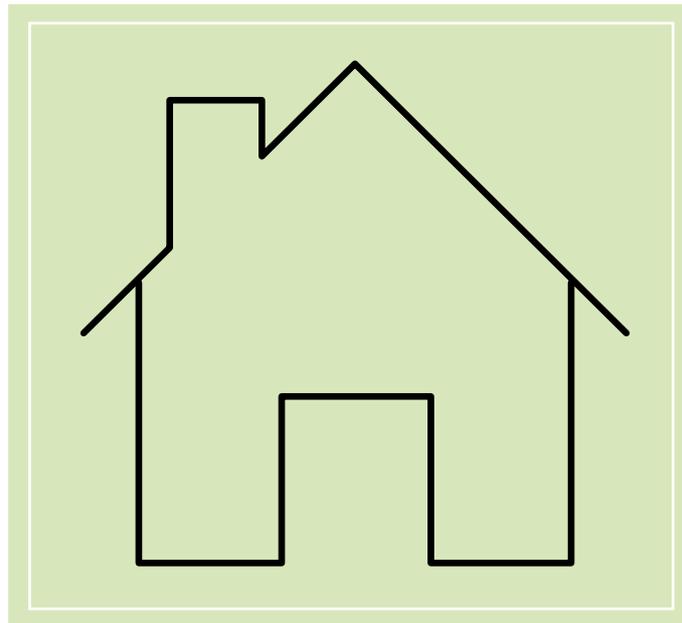
- Access to good condition, well managed homes in the private rented sector
- Increased security of tenure through long-term lease
- Access to same services and support as standard Council tenants
- No deposit or up-front fees required
- Agent who is present, attentive, supportive
- Council presence in places with high PRS concentration, driving up property

#### **Benefits to Wigan Borough's residents**

- A point of redress if there are problems such as anti-social behaviour
- A lettings agency that cares about the wider environment
- A way to address the problem of empty homes

### 3.2.4 Bringing empty homes back into use

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**4,365**  
**empty dwellings**  
**in 2019**  
**Above the national average**

When properties have been vacant for a long time they affect the image of an area and can lead to other problems in the neighbourhood such as crime and antisocial behaviour.

The Big Listening Project suggested that we should review our strategy for bringing these long-term empty homes back into use.

#### **Council Tax on long-term empty homes**

We already charge 50% extra Council Tax on properties that have been empty for more than 2 years.

We will develop an Empty Homes Strategy that will detail a mix of methods we will employ to bring homes that have been empty for more than 2 years back into use. We will look at best practice from other places to inform this strategy. We will also aim to use the latest low carbon technology on any refurbishments the Council undertakes.

## 3.2.5 The right homes for people who need support to live well

Wigan Council's aim is for everyone to live well within their homes and communities so that we hugely reduce the need for the more institutional settings such as care homes and specialist housing schemes.

### The right homes to prevent and relieve homelessness

COVID-19 has accelerated our work with homeless people. We want to use the impetus of the Government's 'Everyone In' programme to make permanent improvements. The incidence of homelessness, and people at risk of homelessness, is starting to increase due to the negative economic impacts of the pandemic.

While we are increasing the supply of affordable homes through various types of support for new home building (see section 3.1.5) we are also starting to purchase specific homes that are suitable and in the right location for particular households on the open market. This enables us both to prevent homelessness and to increase our Housing Revenue Account assets and future borrowing potential.

### The right homes for older and disabled people

Having the right accommodation that enables older people and others with disabilities to live well is key. The Council has a 'future-proofing' policy so that, over time, more homes will be 'suitable' because the common major adaptations will already have been done. Occupiers with support needs will then be able to meet their needs with equipment and small adaptations going forward.

Whenever the Council undertakes works to one of its homes to support a tenant to live well, we think about their long-term needs and those of future residents, and undertake a comprehensive set of works that will enable older and disabled people to live well in the home now and in the future as their needs change.

This means taking a 'customer journey' approach, going beyond the bare minimum when we undertake works that are funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant, for example, and bringing the home up to the Lifetime Homes and Dementia-Friendly Standards wherever possible. We keep a record of adapted homes and our HomeFinder scheme aims to match people to adapted properties.

This approach is more difficult in privately owned homes because of restrictions on how DFG is spent. However, we are exploring how we might offer an ethical equity release scheme to support modifications to the homes of older private owners as their needs change (see Section 3.3).

## 3.3 Access to the right home in the right place

Greater Manchester has a priority to improving access to social housing for those who need it (Priority A4 in the GM Housing Strategy).

Wigan Council is supporting this both by enabling delivery of a broader range of new homes, including some social housing alongside affordable ownership options for those who want to and can afford to buy a home, and through increasing our efforts to help people to find the right home for them.

Taken together, these should help to free up and make more Council homes available for rent to people who need access to inexpensive and secure rented housing.

Developing our equity loans to drive refurbishment and make more homes 'right'

Developing a Transfer Incentives Scheme (for Council Tenants)

Mortgage Rescue Scheme for people at risk of losing their home due to the economic downturn

Supporting people to choose a suitable home for their old age

Supported sharing options

Review and redesign of our Deposit Bond Scheme for private renters

Publicise and advise on the full range of housing options through Homefinder

### 3.3.1 Developing our equity loans to drive refurbishment and make more homes 'right'

The Big Listening Project suggests that, while there is a need for Council homes at affordable rents, there is also a strong appetite for home purchase at affordable levels.

There are several government home ownership schemes already available to support people to buy a home - some of which are available on newly build homes and some also available to purchase an existing home.

We will make sure that people have full information about government home ownership products and developers' own products that are available. We will also support sales of new homes in partnership with developers to enable people to buy a home they can afford.

Since 2012 we have provided 226 equity loans to help younger households to access home ownership. This includes 53 aged between 16 and 25, and a further 173 aged 26-39.

#### **Government home ownership products**

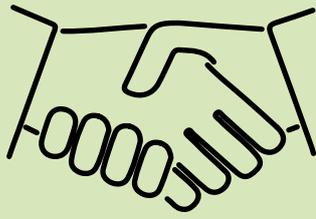
- First Homes, offering 30% discount on new homes to local people and key workers (currently in consultation)
- Lifetime fixed rate mortgage on a new build home requiring a 5% deposit
- Shared ownership

The current Help to Buy product will disappear in 2023

We will also review our own existing Equity Loan scheme and explore the potential to offer additional bespoke 'equity share' products that work for those who can't access government schemes. Any loans we offer will be linked to refurbishment of an existing poor condition dwelling including measures to reduce its carbon footprint.

Our existing scheme is funded through developer contributions for affordable housing (S106) which would not be available to support other products for other purposes. However, we are looking into other ways to fund equity loans including how we might translate the value in the Council's own land into an equity share product, either reducing the cost of purchasing that property for both initial and future buyers (in perpetuity) or recovering the value in the form of a receipt at a later date to generate a future income and return.

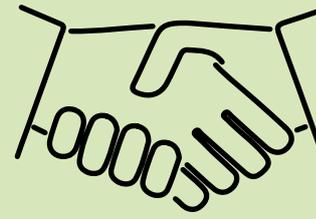
It may be possible to build a 'revolving fund' to support this activity, with the equity being repaid over time or on sale of homes.



### Existing equity loans scheme

We will review this product which is currently:

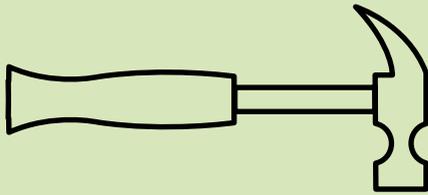
- 5% buyer deposit
- 30% Council equity loan
- 65% mortgage



### Existing equity loans scheme

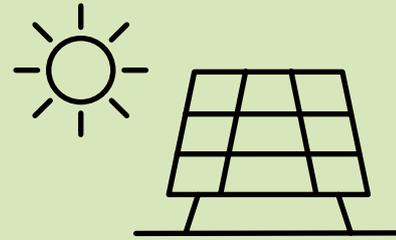
We will review this product which is currently:

- 5% buyer deposit
- 30% Council equity loan
- 65% mortgage



### Purchase to renovate

Aimed at younger people who want to buy a poor condition home at a low price and renovate it to modern standards and reduce carbon footprint.



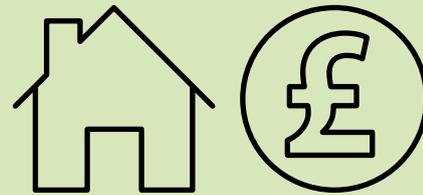
### Elders home improvement loan

An equity release scheme aimed at people over the age of 70, enabling them to make improvements including to energy efficiency

2%

### Private renters purchase

Available to people who have rented privately for 3 years or more and who are struggling to raise a deposit. The deposit required will be reduced to 2% of purchase price



### Lease, repair, manage scheme

This will be for people with 2nd homes (including empty homes) who would like to become landlords and let their homes through our Ethical Lettings Agency

We will explore the possibility of borrowing from investment funds, such as pension funds, to increase the finances available to support this programme.

### 3.3.2 Developing a Transfer Incentives Scheme (for Council Tenants)

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We will consider introducing a scheme that helps Council tenants to access low cost home ownership if they want to and can afford to do so. This would be aligned to our developing equity loans portfolio and may be focused on those Council properties that are in greatest demand, which may be different in different locations. The scheme could include, for example, financial incentives, financial advice, support to buy, support to move.

The aim will be two-fold: to support tenants who would prefer to buy a home and to free up social housing, increasing the supply for those in need of an affordable, secure, stable home to rent.

### 3.3.3 Mortgage rescue

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We will explore the possibility of developing a mortgage rescue scheme to help homeowners who lose their livelihoods to continue living in their home. This will involve purchase of the home by the Council and renting back to the household.

### 3.3.4 Supporting people to choose a suitable home for their old age

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We want our older people to be happy, comfortable, safe and connected where they live. We are intending to upgrade the options available for our older people and to increase the number of 'intentional communities' including in our sheltered and extra care accommodation but also through new possibilities such as cohousing [See section 3.3.5].

Older people often need help with the decision-making process especially if they are becoming less able to manage in their existing home or contemplating moving to a different home that will meet their needs better. We want to help people to be able to find a home that is suitable for their changing circumstances whether they are tenants or home owners.



### 3.3.5 Supported sharing options

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Enabled by digital technologies more people are becoming inclined to share their living spaces and sometimes aspects of their lives too.

The Council wants to support people to do this where it is right for them. We will set a standard for existing Houses in Multiple Occupation that we expect our landlords to achieve and will support them to achieve it. In addition, we will consider supporting a range of options for sharing including new build options.



### 3.3.6 Supported access to good quality private rented sector

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We are developing a range of services to help open up access of the private rented sector and provide the best start to a tenancy, including:

- Redesign of our Bond Scheme so that finding a deposit is not a barrier to accessing a private rented home
- Offer of insurance products made available through the GMCA Help2Rent scheme
- Pre-tenancy training to help tenants to manage their tenancies well
- Increased online support for tenants and landlords

These elements will operate alongside our new three-way deal and ethical lettings agency (see Section 3.2.3) with incentives for landlords and tenants to engage positively.

### 3.3.7 Publicise and advise on the full range of housing options through Homefinder

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The Council's Homefinder Service is currently seen as a route into Council housing.

Some of those registered for housing could potentially afford to maintain mortgage payments in the long-term if they were supported to purchase a home and some may also prefer to buy if they could secure a mortgage. Our Housing Needs Assessment also shows that 21% of Council tenants earn over £20,800 and 4.4% earn over £39,000. These groups could also afford different tenure options.

In view of this, we want the Housing Options Services and Housing Register to become a route to accessing the full range of housing options including both Government schemes and Wigan Council's own affordable home ownership, equity loans and sharing options.

We intend to expand the information and advice we offer through our allocations process and Homefinder to enable people to access all the affordable rent and purchase options set out in this Housing Strategy across all locations. This includes financial advice, support with home purchase, private rental deposits, mortgage rescue, support to move house (for eligible people over 65) and supporting people to make meaningful local connections (see section 3.2). We will undertake affordability checks so that those who wish to take up the home ownership options understand their liabilities and can be sure they can afford the mortgage payments in the long-term.

This will help more people to find and move into a home that suits them at a price they can afford. It will also help more households who cannot afford to purchase to secure an affordable Council home to rent.

## Section 4

# Healthy homes, households, communities and places



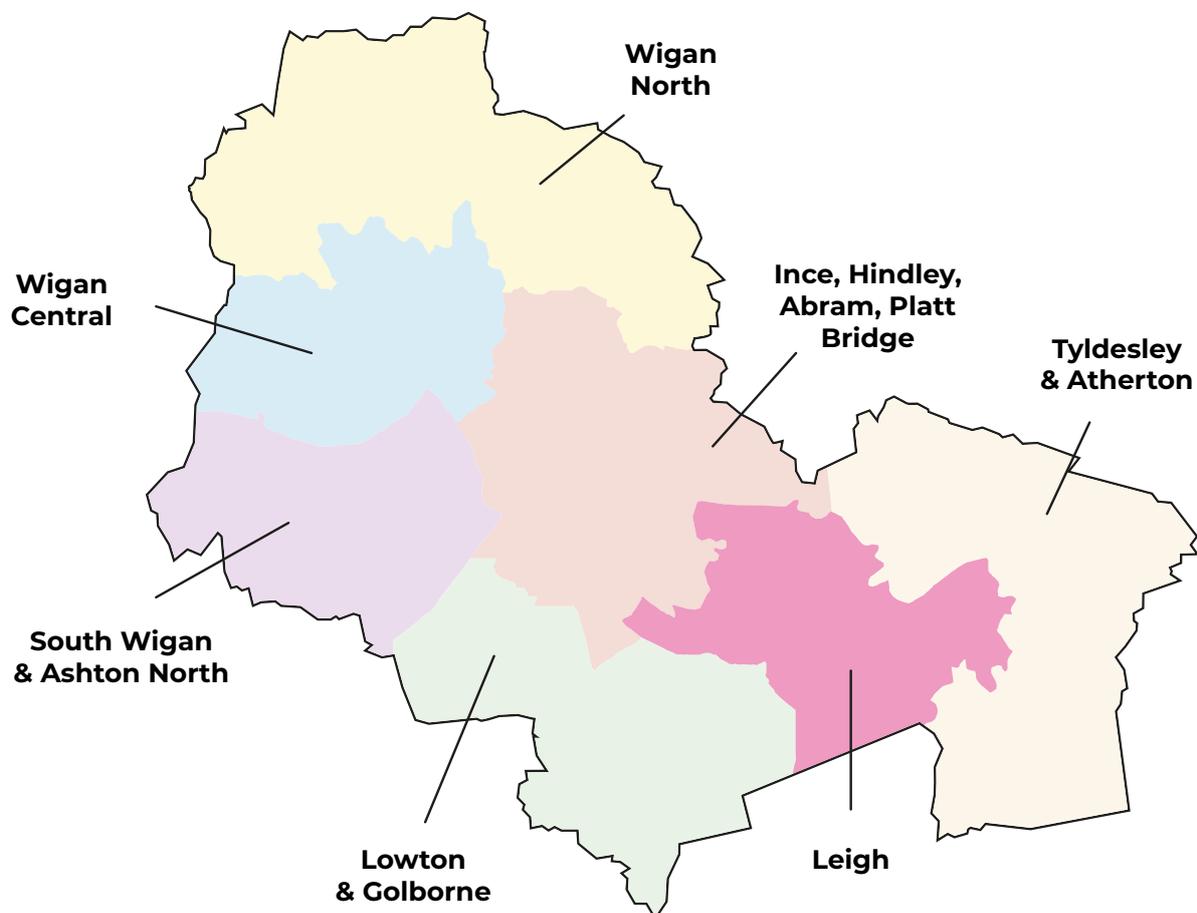
## “A healthy economy needs a healthy, happy population to power it”

Better health is an important outcome for this housing strategy and Healthy Homes is a priority across Greater Manchester (Strategic Priority A3 in the GM Housing Strategy). We have made good progress and we are taking further steps to address housing problems in a more proactive and targeted way and to more fully integrate this way of working within our place-based partnership model.

### The Healthier Wigan Partnership: making health everyone’s business

Wigan Council has developed a place-based model integrating the Council’s multi-disciplinary teams, partners and health services within seven neighbourhoods of 30-50,000 residents.

## Neighbourhoods



Through the Healthier Wigan Partnership, partners and commissioners are bound by an Alliance Agreement to deliver integrated health and care through transformation out of hospital services, to improve the health outcomes of the population and ensure an affordable health care system in the future. All partners are applying an asset-based approach building on the strengths of residents and communities to develop self-reliance, independence and interdependence.

We have started to align housing with our neighbourhoods so that residents can get help to address a problem with their housing through our place-based model.

## **Improving health through the home: guidance from Public Health England**

The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing, throughout life. It is a wider determinant of health.

### **There are risks to an individual's physical and mental health associated with living in:**

- An unhealthy home: one that is cold, damp, or otherwise hazardous home
- An unsuitable home: one that doesn't meet the household's needs due to risks such as being overcrowded or inaccessible to a disabled or older person
- An unstable home: one that does not provide a sense of safety and security including precarious living circumstances and/or homelessness

The right home environment protects and improves health and wellbeing, and prevents physical and mental ill health.

### **It also enables people to:**

- manage their own health and care needs, including long term conditions
- live independently, safely and well in their own home for as long as they choose
- complete treatment and recover from substance misuse, tuberculosis or other ill-health
- move on successfully from homelessness or other traumatic life event
- access and sustain education, training and employment
- participate and contribute to society

### **It can:**

- delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care
- prevent hospital admissions
- enable timely discharge from hospital, and prevent re-admissions
- enable rapid recovery from periods of ill health or planned admissions

It is also essential to ambitions for the economy.

*[www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-through-the-home/improving-health-through-the-home](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-health-through-the-home/improving-health-through-the-home)*

## 4.1 Healthy homes and households

We are building on some strong foundations in our efforts to improve health through the home. Our AWARM and Hospital Discharge schemes both help prevent people's health conditions worsening.

### **Keeping people warm in their homes through AWARM Plus**

Wigan Council already helps people who are struggling to keep their homes warm through our AWARM Plus scheme. We undertake 'Healthy Homes Checks' and help home owners and private renters to access a range of funding to cover the costs of fixing boilers and installing heating, insulation and draft-proofing.

We also help people to find other ways of reducing fuel bills and increasing their incomes from benefits where they're eligible.

### **Wigan Council's integrated approach to hospital discharge and admissions prevention**

Wigan Council's Integrated Discharge Team works to ensure patients can be discharged safely to their home from hospital (rather than into residential care). This involves wrapping health and care services around them in a coordinated way and involves discharge nurses, social workers, reablement team and support from voluntary and community group.

The team works with housing and homelessness staff to action housing-related issues that are preventing discharge of medically fit patients so that the home setting is suitable to meet individuals' needs minimising the amount of time they spend in hospital.

Wigan Council's Community Services Team – including community matrons and nurses, occupational therapists and reablement staff – working alongside GPs aim to treat and support people in their home to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital.

They are supported by professional teams and community partners through the neighbourhoods model.

### **Other elements of our developing approach to community-based health and care support include:**

- A Falls Prevention and Bone Health Strategy
- A clinically focused Community Services Programme to provide care closer to home (and away from hospitals)
- A Better at Home team to support the 'Discharge to Assess' process
- A step-down scheme (7-bed capacity) to support reablement and consideration of future housing options

Going forward, there is an opportunity to further integrate our housing-related responses into both the neighbourhoods model and the hospital discharge and admissions prevention schemes to better support more households, at critical moments in their health and care journeys, to occupy healthy, suitable and stable accommodation.

This can sometimes be achieved through a range of measures to enable people to live well within their existing home while in other instances it may mean helping households to find and move into a different home that better suits their needs. Registered providers who have housing-health schemes may be in a position to support this work.

We will formalise key housing roles within the neighbourhoods teams providing direct access to housing specialists who can broker housing solutions for residents – whether they are private renters, owner occupiers, housing association or Council tenants – on a case by case basis.

We will develop a Housing, Health and Care Action Plan that sets out the full range of actions we will take in order to address households' housing issues and including by embedding housing within other programmes. This is to ensure that housing-related matters that impact on people's health and wellbeing are addressed, both as a preventative measure and on discharge from hospital.

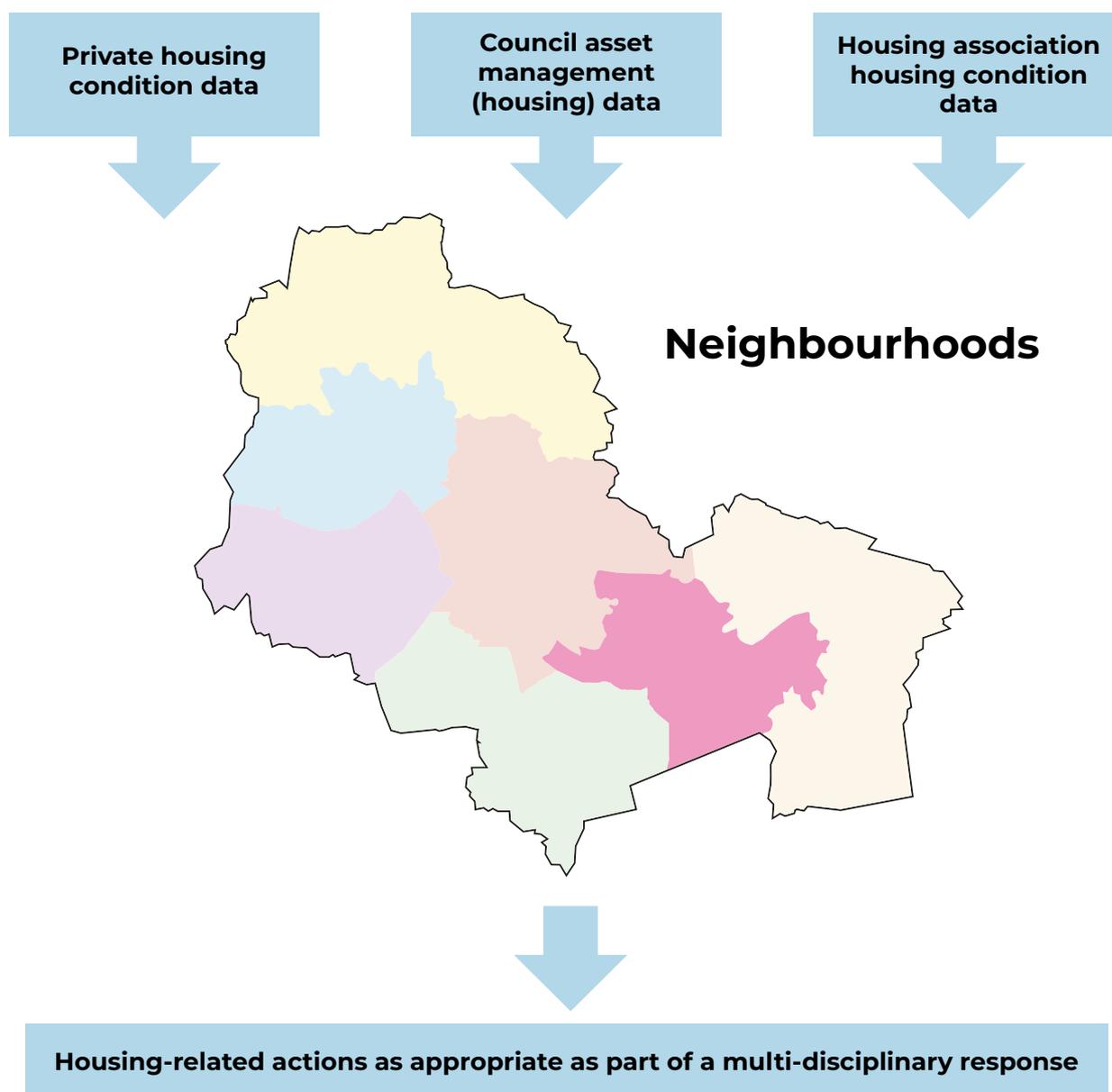
## Steps towards a more proactive and targeted approach

Significant public health gains can be achieved by understanding where the complex, compound problems lie and addressing the problems in a proactive, targeted and, in an increasingly preventative way.

Our neighbourhood profiles are showing that health problems are more concentrated, and life expectancy more limited, in some of Wigan Borough's neighbourhoods than in others. These neighbourhoods are also more likely to be those that have lower educational attainment, fewer economically active people and higher levels of unhealthy, unsuitable or unstable housing.

At the same time as supporting individuals who present with multiple issues, we will also focus our efforts on those places where people are disadvantaged by multiple, often complex, problems. These areas will be a bigger focus for our multidisciplinary teams and we are looking at more proactive ways of working with these communities to build their resilience, and reduce health inequalities and poor health outcomes.

Driven by our data, as well as the information we collect through our 'eyes and ears' approach to service interactions with residents, we are increasingly taking a more proactive and targeted approach to addressing these problems. To do this we will need much better information about the suitability and condition of private sector homes and the nature of their problems in different locations across the borough. We will do this by commissioning a Private House Condition Survey.



The type of action we take will vary depending on the nature of the problems and what those households and communities want.

Interventions we could employ to improve homes and neighbourhoods, particularly those with high levels of poor condition or badly managed private housing might include:

- Energy saving advice and help with switching energy suppliers available to all residents including Council tenants, private tenants and owners, and housing association tenants in partnership with our registered providers. [Add this into the Action Plan]
- Selective licensing of private landlords in specific localities e.g. Leigh and Wigan Central. The fees we can charge for licenses could fund our enforcement work
- Visits to all households in defined streets/areas to identify problems
- Increase our capacity to use our legal enforcement powers more proactively to compel landlords to act to improve poor condition private rented homes coupled with bespoke, asset-based support for households where appropriate
- Purchase specific homes for refurbishment and sale to help to change the dynamics of the neighbourhood
- Support older and disabled private home-owners to install adaptations or to remodel their homes as necessary e.g. drawing on the Disabled Facilities Grant
- Develop and Ethical Equity Release scheme and/or low-cost loans product to enable more owner-occupiers to undertake the necessary major works
- Improvements to the public realm such as clearing fly-tipping, graffiti.

We will also set out our medium and long-term ambitions to improve private homes to improve health across the borough and work with other GM authorities to make a case for higher levels of investment in unhealthy, unsuitable, unstable private housing. This issue has become more urgent since COVID-19 exposed the inadequacy of some homes in which some people have had to ‘stay home’ for a prolonged period.

## 4.2 Healthy communities and places we can be proud of

Through the Big Listening Project we heard that residents care hugely about the places they live in. You want to feel good about where you live; for our towns to have soul and for people to feel pride in their places so that anti-social behaviour is minimised; you want our public spaces to be high quality and connected and our many green spaces protected. Brownfield development is preferred over greenfield and there is a concern that infrastructure can sometimes be an afterthought in new housing developments.



## 4.2.1 Communities at the centre, driving improvement in their neighbourhoods

### Thriving community hubs: building resilience and solving problems

To support and build thriving communities, the Council has invested Community Investment Funding (CIF) and has transferred physical assets to the voluntary and community sector over the last few years. This has supported growth of grass roots projects, volunteering and social enterprises and has strengthened community assets so that communities are now supporting themselves across the borough. There are community-run cafes, food banks, gardening projects, activities for children and young people and more, many of which can be found in the Wigan Borough Community Book.

The Community Resilience Index is a method Wigan Council uses to identify those areas that require prioritised attention based on several key drivers of demand. The index helps us understand the impact austerity may be having on communities and seeks to measure the strength of the community and how it has been supported through the period of austerity. We aim to use the results of the index to support decision making around demand and need at the neighbourhood level.

Local people often have insight into how local problems might be solved. So service providers are now involving residents much more both in identifying the solutions and in making them happen. Through the neighbourhoods and our ‘huddles’ we are aiming to bring the right partners together to help implement solutions to specific issues. Housing will become more involved, playing their part in addressing issues both on Council estates and in areas of private housing.

We are also starting to work much more closely with residents to make future plans for their towns and neighbourhoods including through ‘Our Towns’ programme, the Wigan Borough Community Partnership and our local voluntary, community and faith sector.

## 4.2.2 Healthy place-shaping principles

Wherever new house building or home improvement work is going on we will also pay attention to the quality of the environment. We will work to two sets of principles that will help us to work through the specific issues in each place. They are ‘Healthy Placeshaping’ and ‘Lifetime Neighbourhoods’ principles.

### The 10 Healthy Placeshaping Principles

1. Plan ahead collectively
2. Assess local health care needs and assets
3. Connect, involve and empower people and communities
4. Create compact neighbourhoods
5. Maximise active travel
6. Inspire and enable healthy eating
7. Foster health in homes and buildings
8. Enable healthy play and leisure
9. Develop health services that enable people to stay well
10. Create integrated health and wellbeing centres

Source: Putting Health into Place: Public Health England and NHS England<sup>1</sup>

A Lifetime Neighbourhood is one in which civic and social processes, together with physical conditions, achieve the following outcomes:

- An environment that is accessible and inclusive, aesthetically pleasing and safe
- A community that offers plenty of services, facilities and open space
- A strong social and civic fabric, including volunteering and informal networks
- A culture of consultation and user empowerment amongst decision makers
- A strong local identity and sense of place

## A Wigan Borough checklist for great places

We will work with our various community groups and partnerships to develop a ‘Wigan Borough checklist’ and we will use it throughout our planning and place-shaping activity to make sure we consider all the important elements in developing good quality places.

### Such a checklist might include:

Element	What we check
<b>Infrastructure</b>	Including GPs, schools, road traffic: How are the infrastructure requirements of the new development being considered? How is the local community being engaged in discussions? What will be done as a result?
<b>Parks and green spaces</b>	How will the development minimise the impact on our green spaces and/or create new parks and green spaces?
<b>Transport, active travel, air pollution</b>	How does the new development enable people to get around in a way that limits air pollution?
<b>Connected, healthy people</b>	How will the development produce spaces where people like to meet and congregate? How will it support and enable community-led activity?
<b>Asset-based approach</b>	Are we building on local community assets and creating resilient communities based on their strengths and local assets?
<b>Healthy living</b>	How might the new environment enable free food growing opportunities? How might it support people to become more active?
<b>Access to healthcare and schools</b>	How will the people living there access

### 4.2.3 Village Hubs: where people of all ages can have live well

We intend to upgrade our 42 sheltered housing schemes into ‘village hubs’ with closer connections to a range of local facilities including health centres, shops, schools, community centres and faith centres. This will make it easier for older people living in the schemes and in the surrounding areas to connect with other local residents and access facilities, community groups and activities. We also want to offer tenancies in the schemes to a wider age-group to make them inter-generational over time.

Natural communities have been shown to provide important informal support through the COVID-19 pandemic. We will learn from this experience to make sure these ‘hubs’ can enable high levels of support while maintaining social distancing.

To get this right we are undertaking an options appraisal on each of our schemes with existing scheme residents, others living in the surrounding neighbourhood, established community groups and the SRF leads. From this we will develop a plan for each scheme that includes both remodelling of the schemes and community development to support communities strengthening.

## Section 5

# Getting the right support



Wigan Council and Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group are committed to meeting the needs and aspirations of people to live valued lives in their own homes and communities. We want people who need additional support to live independently and interdependently within their neighbourhoods to live well, wherever they live, and we want to reduce the use of residential care and inappropriate admissions to hospital.

### **Supporting people successfully requires:**

- Access to accommodation that is suitable, in a suitable location (see sections 3 and 4.1)
- Meaningful connection with supportive communities (see section 4.2)
- The right additional support, as necessary, which might change over time

If we can offer people these three things, there's no reason why they can't live there for ever or at least for as long as they want to.



## **5.1 Supported living**

Building on the success of our HomeCare neighbourhood model for supporting older people we are transforming the way we support people to live well within the community.

### **Deal 2030 Care and Support Ethical Framework Service Specification**

In November 2019 we published our Deal 2030 Care and Support Ethical Framework to deliver a transformed model of quality, ethical asset-based care and support by the delivered by skilled, caring and compassionate workers.

#### **It sets out:**

- Our approach to establishing a strong partnership of the best care and support providers
- Our values, attitudes and behaviours that we expect from our provider partners
- Our plans for the future and approach to supporting people to live well at home
- The diverse range of care and support services – organised into 17 contracts lots
- How we will commission the best ethical providers who demonstrate that they provide asset-based support to their customers while rewarding and recognising the important role of their caring and compassionate workforce
- Our hope that that Framework will support Wigan Borough residents to make informed decisions about the right care and support for them.

Deal for Care Leavers We have a Deal for Care Leavers<sup>4</sup> that includes access to suitable accommodation. This is working well and we will continue to work with children in care and care leavers to enhance their experience of moving into independence.

Going forward, across our whole support offer, we are focusing our efforts on:

1. Intelligent use of technology in people's homes such as:

- Cameras and motion-sensors to track activity
- Use of Alexa to make requests

2. Increasing support provided by natural communities such as:

- Supported sharing options e.g. Shared Lives
- Community-based models designed to develop supportive connections between people e.g. Key-ring [www.keyring.org/what-we-do](http://www.keyring.org/what-we-do)

3. Providing better access to local amenities such as:

- Developing Village Hubs to bring local amenities closer to people
- Helping people to establish connections with local Community Centres

## 5.2 Preventing and relieving homelessness and rough sleeping

Wigan Council has a purposefully positive attitude and asset-based mind-set when it comes to addressing homelessness in Wigan Borough. Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is also a priority across Greater Manchester (Strategic Priority A1 in the GM Housing Strategy).

In the 2 years running up to the Coronavirus pandemic, rough sleeping in the borough had declined from 30 to eight, partly due to GM investment in A Bed Every Night programme. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 had led to personalised support planning and new partnerships with communities and housing associations, enabling us to increase and improve the support to more households at risk of becoming homeless. Communities had become more involved in leading homelessness work through the Community Investment Fund supporting initiatives such as The Brick, Helping the Homeless and The Bridge. And the Council had recently opened two Homeless Hubs providing 15 beds in each and providing 24/7 support.

Everyone In – arrangements for Wigan Borough's homeless through the pandemic The pandemic has made us work completely differently with homeless people. The Government's 'Everyone In' programme prompted rapid action to accommodate all those living in shared accommodation, rough sleepers and people who have become homeless through the lockdown period in self-contained hotel accommodation. We have also transferred and built support we offer within the hotel environment. The experience for homeless people has, in general, been a positive one. People have enjoyed having private space due to social distance requirements for separate rather than shared sleeping arrangements. The support they have received has been more coordinated as some of the bureaucratic, funding and other barriers dissolved in the effort to move quickly. As we move out of the response phase into the recovery phase, Wigan Council intends to maintain many of the new practices that have had a positive impact on people's lives.

<sup>4</sup> Deal for Care Leavers

[www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Health-Social-Care/Children-and-young-people/Care-leavers/Deal-for-care-leavers-booklet.pdf](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Health-Social-Care/Children-and-young-people/Care-leavers/Deal-for-care-leavers-booklet.pdf)

## **Preventing and relieving homelessness**

We are anticipating an increase in homeless presentations as the Government's business continuity schemes come to an end and more people lose their livelihoods.

Our principle aim is to act to prevent people from becoming homeless where possible through measures such as the Deal for Private Landlords and Tenants that includes a landlord-tenant liaison function (section 3.2.3) and through offering a Mortgage Rescue option (section 3.3.3). Where this is not possible, we will aim to rehouse people quickly through a responsive allocations process to avoid the incidence of rough sleeping. In addition to building new affordable homes, we are taking action to secure more homes to offer to people in need due to homelessness. We will do this by purchasing specific types of homes for specific purposes including new and existing dwellings and through securing more homes through the Ethical Lettings Agency (see sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.5).

### **Rough sleeping**

We intend to build on the positive experiences and learning through the pandemic to improve how we accommodate and support homeless people towards recovery and stable living situations.

#### **We are taking urgent action to:**

- Secure medium-term use of the hotel through a contractual agreement, to continue to accommodate homeless people
- Remodel our existing temporary accommodation to create independent space in dormitories
- Flex our support arrangements to provide suitable support in whichever location it is required
- Move people into more stable forms of accommodation as soon as possible including through the Housing First programme

## **5.3 Supporting private tenants through better advocacy**

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Insecurity of tenancies is a big problem affecting people's health and can compound other difficulties that some private renters also face.

While we are focusing on the creation of pathways to good and appropriate private rented housing, in some instances our three-way Deal with landlords and tenants will be insufficient. Some tenants will need higher levels of support to maintain their tenancy and some could require protection from exploitation from their landlords. They may also need help with other aspect of their lives.

We are therefore increasing our advice and support for existing private rented tenants to help them to sustain their tenancies. This could include: tailored tenancy support, landlord liaison to persuade landlords to take action and resolve issues, support with claims of landlord harassment and illegal eviction.

## Section 6

# Revolution in quality low carbon homes



**In July 2019, Wigan Council declared a Climate Emergency.**

The scientific evidence on climate change is unequivocal and during the 2019 General Assembly, the United Nations stated that “we may have just 11 years left to limit a climate change catastrophe”. As a society we need to act now and decisively to slow down and limit the impact of climate change. Our citizens, community groups and young people made it clear to us during the Big Listening Project, that the environment and effects of climate changes were key issues and present a major concern.

The recently published Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan together with our own Climate Change Strategy will now form our route map to achieving our key environmental objectives. We are working closely with other local authorities through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and as part of the GM Housing Providers group to develop an approach that enables Greater Manchester to achieve ‘net zero-carbon’ new homes by 2028 and ‘carbon neutral’ existing homes by 2038. These are challenging targets.



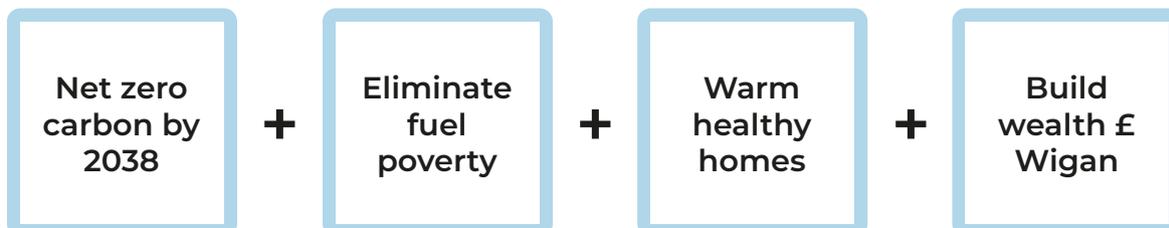
**GM target to achieve  
100% net zero-carbon new homes by 2028**

**GM target to achieve  
100% carbon neutral homes by 2038,  
12 years ahead of the UK target**

Since 37.5% of emissions come from domestic gas and electricity uses we need a significant focus on Wigan Boroughs homes; this includes renewable sources of energy for heating and lighting as well as increasing their energy efficiency for example through insulation.

Low carbon homes will deliver health and social benefits too. Respiratory problems are a significant factor in admissions to Wigan Borough’s hospitals and we are keen to eliminate the impact of poor housing as soon as possible.

Properly insulated, energy efficient homes will be warmer with lower fuel bills; they are cheaper to run and healthier to live in. Innovative businesses that can contribute to emergence of an effective ‘climate change industry’ enabling the shift to carbon neutral in Wigan Borough could help to create community wealth if supported in the right way. Identifying pathways to volume domestic retrofit and reducing fuel poverty is also a priority across Greater Manchester (Strategic Priority A5 in the GM Housing Strategy).



## 6.1 Our approach to delivering low carbon homes

The industry in low carbon and renewable technology is not yet operating at scale; the technology is developing all the time and it is not yet available at realistic prices, the maintenance supply chain for the new technologies is immature and a recent Government consultation in May 2020 demonstrated that the government is still not clear on how the UK will meet climate change targets for housing. Achieving these carbon neutral targets across the borough's 147,000 existing homes by 2038 as well as all new homes built by 2028 will require a dynamic and future-facing approach that assesses and embeds new opportunities and technologies as they emerge.

Our overall approach will be to fast-track our activity on new and existing Council homes and use our learning to develop our expectations of and support for private developers, landlords and owners to take action. Our learning through the early phases will also help us to develop later phases of our activity plan for bringing all 22,000 Council homes up to carbon neutral standards.

We will adopt a 'fabric first' approach to renovating existing homes, so that heat loss and energy requirements are minimised. We also intend to move to a position where all Wigan Borough's homes are powered by a renewable energy source. We are exploring a range of technologies including, for example, ground source heat from Wigan Borough's many mines and biogas energy from food waste.

### 6.1.1 How are we doing so far? Our baseline position

Between 2005 and 2017 the Council as a whole reduced its carbon emissions by 43%, from 1,994.4 kilo tonnes to 1,343.5 kilo tonnes. This was reflected in the domestic sector which decreased from 770 to 500 kilo tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>5</sup>.

#### **Our progress towards carbon neutral homes**

- We have recently completed a Stock Condition Survey of Council-owned homes so we know the state of our housing assets
- The average SAP rating for Council homes has shown some improvement over the last 10 years. In 2019, an increasing majority of the Council's own homes achieved a SAP rating of 'C'. The Council has committed to achieving a minimum C SAP rating for all its existing homes by 2025.
- Since 2005, energy efficient 'A' rated gas condensing boilers have been installed to over 16,400 Council homes (82% of the stock).
- 1,465 of our homes now have solar PV's; tenants benefit from free electricity during daylight hours and the Council receives an annual feed in tariff.
- In 2014, air source heat pumps were installed in 307 properties and a further 42 installed in four sheltered schemes replacing old inefficient storage heaters.
- The majority of homes for which cavity wall insulation and loft insulation are suitable have had upgrades and properties received double glazed UPVC- windows between 1994-2003. Some of these windows will need to be replaced again in the near future.
- External Wall Insulation has improved the performance of 370 non-traditional properties (1.7% of the total stock). This programme included loft insulation and the replacing of windows and doors with 'A' rated components.
- Replacement cladding to six high rise blocks in 2018 also improved their environmental performance.
- Fifty Council staff have now attended the Carbon Literacy Training. The plan is for all 4,300 Council employees, all elected members and other selected partners to complete the training by the end of 2023.

Many of these improvements to the environmental performance of the Council's housing stock have been made through accessing initiative-based funding. The ad-hoc nature of these initiatives has left a legacy of ad hoc maintenance arrangements and this is inefficient. We will continue with our boiler replacement, insulation and low energy lighting programmes in the short term and going forward, we will take greater account of the potential to standardise ongoing maintenance to increase efficiency across all 22,000 homes.

<sup>5</sup> These figures are taken from a graph on p12 of Wigan Council Environmental Strategy Summary – they need refining

# Our approach to low carbon homes

## NEW HOMES Net zero carbon by 2028

### New Council homes

- All new homes built to zero carbon standards ahead of 2028
- Piloting 2 new build schemes, designed to become zero carbon when technology allows

### New HA homes

- Commitment to all new homes built to zero carbon standards ahead of 2028

### New private homes

- GMCA and LAs consulting on additions to building regulations to require all new homes built in GM to meet zero-carbon standards by 2028
- Support and incentivise developers that are prepared to build to zero-carbon standards

## EXISTING HOMES Carbon neutral by 2038

### Existing Council homes

- Pioneering deep retrofit of small number homes to learn and push boundaries
- Phased approach to bringing all 22,000 homes up to net zero carbon standards
- Increase volume of deep retrofit over time as new technologies become available and the market develops

### Existing HA homes

- Commitment to achieving minimum SAP rating C by 2025

### Existing private homes

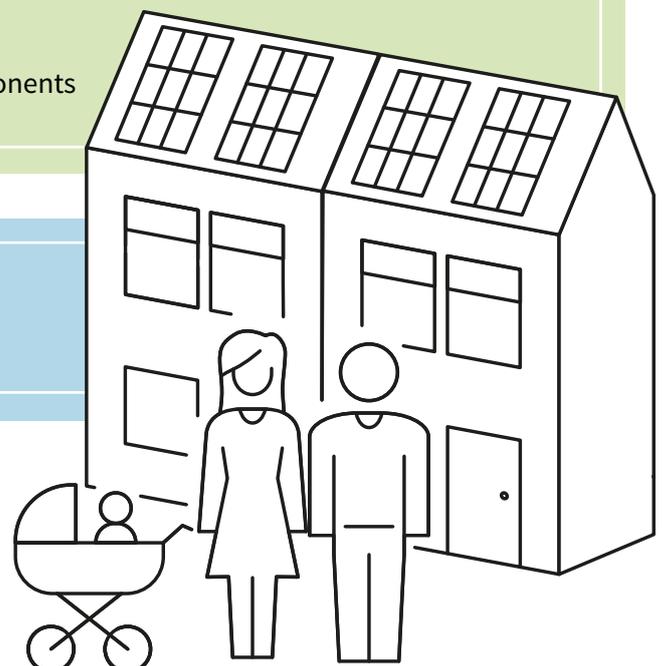
- Private stock condition survey (to determine baseline position)
- Apply new technologies to empty home refurbishment
- Council equity loans and landlord incentives conditional on achieving certain standards

## Market-shaping and industry development

New build homes: MMC | Existing homes: Retrofit components  
Renewable energy sources

## Learning and collaborating with Greater Manchester

E.g. retrofit research



## 6.2 New build homes – towards net zero carbon by 2028

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Greater Manchester Combined Authority and LAs are consulting on higher standards for all new builds to be net carbon-zero by 2028, or even sooner on the advice of experts. This is likely to lead to additional building regulations for all new buildings across the region to meet the agreed target. The specification used for new housing developed through the Council's Newbuild Programme already exceeds minimum Building Regulations for insulation.

### 6.2.1 New Council-built housing schemes

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The Council has adopted a 'fabric first' approach to design in its direct delivery programme. We are trialling new technologies in three low carbon new build housing schemes with a view to establishing the most appropriate solution to adopt going forward. These schemes are future proofed for adopting new zero carbon technology, including battery storage and smart energy solutions in future, once this becomes more viable and feasible.

In 2020/21 schemes will commence at Sandalwood Drive and Wharfdale, both utilising ground source heat pump technology and PV solar panels which can be upgraded to a net zero carbon standard in the future when PV solar panel battery technology improves. Ground source heat pump technology will also be trialled at a further scheme in Standish. We will explore opportunities offered by these schemes to 'upskill' our DLO staff to be able to undertake future maintenance and repair of these systems.

Going forward we will make sure that any new builds are either net zero carbon at completion or can be easily adapted before the 2028 deadline.

### 6.2.2 New housing association homes

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We are working with Greater Manchester Housing Providers to support solutions for housing association homes, including homes built within Wigan Borough. All GM providers have committed to building all new homes to net zero carbon standards ahead of the 2028 date.

### 6.2.3 New private homes

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#### **Requiring private developers to build to higher standards will increase the cost of development.**

We are taking a GM-wide approach to planning policies to develop a common requirement across all ten authorities and we will also work with authorities beyond the GM boundary to persuade them to also adopt the new standard. Taking a common approach will help to bring consistency in the development market and to drive up standards.

In addition to this, the Council will orient its support and incentives towards those developers that are prepared to build to the new standards. This includes the support we provide to improve viability of new homes, set out in section 3.1.5. We will promote the benefits of occupying a net zero-carbon homes, such as low or zero fuel bills, to potential buyers and the Council's new build equity loans scheme will only be available to those purchasing a new net zero carbon home.

There may be opportunities around modular construction to re-define 'good design' that can contribute to the carbon reduction agenda. The Council is considering small site delivery through Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). Separately, the Council is seeking to deliver a pilot MMC project using a local supplier.

## 6.3 Existing homes – towards carbon neutral by 2038

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### 6.3.1 Existing Council homes

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Over the next five years (Stage 1 of our Retrofit Programme), we will adopt a twin-track approach to bringing Council homes up to carbon neutral standards.

#### **Deep retrofit pilots to push boundaries and upskill the workforce**

In 2021/22 we will embark on a small ‘deep retrofit’ pilot to bring around 10-20 Council homes to carbon neutral standard, subject to funding being available. Deep retrofit requires extensive work to existing homes to apply a whole range of measures, including a renewable energy source, all at once.

We will learn from other Councils that are ahead in retrofitting their housing stock and with other GM local authorities will explore different models of retrofit including modular retrofit. Through the pilot, we will upskill our DLO in retrofitting homes aiming to develop an efficient standardised retrofit process that incorporates the best and most appropriate technology available at the time for that particular property and that both minimises the cost, time taken and disruption to tenants.

Initially we will prioritise properties that are empty between relets. We will also identify one or more housing schemes that require more extensive remodelling or repurposing and undertake these works at the same time as deep retrofit. This could include, for example, improvements to meet Lifetime Homes Standards or remodelling to upgrade sheltered bedsits into two-bedroom flats. This will allow us to better understand scheme-based renewable heating and energy sources that may not be suitable for single dwellings.

As tenants move into the retrofitted homes, we will train them how to minimise/optimize energy use while keeping the home at ambient temperature. We will ensure tenants are treated fairly and can live comfortably while the works are taking place.

Further phases of the deep retrofit programme will be informed by our learning from the earlier phases and from the experience of colleagues across Greater Manchester.

#### **Phased approach to all 22,000 Council homes**

In addition to the small-scale deep retrofit programme, we will continue improving the energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions across all our housing stock.

In line with the ‘fabric first’ approach, this will initially focus on upgrades to insulation. We will also assess which of our properties are suitable for PV panels and aim secure external funding for new mechanical and electrical systems aligned to the insulation improvements, with a view to installing more PV panels over the coming years. We may start to phase out new gas boiler installations depending on how the national strategy develops and to what extent the price of air source heat pumps decreases.

Longer term, how we phase works to the Council stock will depend on what we learn from our deep retrofit pilots and from our collaborations across Greater Manchester. It will also depend to some extent on how new technology emerges and on the Government’s strategy and programmes.

## 6.3.2 Existing Housing association homes

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Greater Manchester Housing Providers have committed to achieving a minimum C SAP rating for all existing homes by 2025.

## 6.3.3 Towards zero-carbon private homes

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The Council's short-term priority is to undertake a private stock condition survey that has a focus on energy efficiency and carbon status. This will provide good information about the baseline position; the current status of the existing private housing stock. This will inform a longer term approach that we will develop in partnership with authorities across Greater Manchester.

We will also employ a variety of levers to encourage property owners to improve the fabric of private homes and, where possible, to installing renewable energy.

**This includes, for example:**

- Applying new technologies to all our empty home refurbishment
- Making our equity loans scheme conditional on achieving certain low carbon standards
- Offering landlord incentives only on the condition that certain standards are met
- Providing information, advice and support for homeowners to encourage them to undertake their own low carbon upgrades and refurbishment.

## 6.4 Accelerating capacity and capability for retrofit

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There is a sector skills challenge to overcome in order to retrofit at scale: a lack of capacity and capability for making and installing components successfully. This comes with significant up front costs that either need to be passed on to the consumer or subsidised in some way.

Action is being taken at Greater Manchester level to bring together a 'Retrofit Partnership Accelerator' of existing activity to focus collectively on issues of demand, supply, skills and access to finance to develop delivery and business models for whole house retrofit.

Wigan Council is looking at how it can best encourage new 'green' businesses and upskill the workforce – coordinated with training colleges – to support both these new sectors and the existing construction industry to adopt green skills. Through this, we intend to support community wealth-building by identifying local business opportunities that will arise from the move towards a low carbon future e.g. renewable energy, sustainable transport, smart technologies, research and development and supporting growth of business and skills opportunities. We will support innovation and rapid learning where this will lead to quality solutions and upscaling.

## 6.5 Other actions to achieve net zero carbon homes and places

### Decarbonisation

Part of the route map towards becoming net carbon neutral must involve carbon capture. We recently announced Wigan Council's contribution to a 'Northern Forest' by planting 1 million new trees across the borough by 2030 to double the current tree canopy. We will also reduce our grounds maintenance to contribute to our target to naturalise 50 hectares of our borough by 2030.

### Active travel and air quality

We are encouraging people to use greener travel by improving connectivity and travel options across the borough.

We will spend around £40m over next 5 years to improve residents' ability to walk and cycle around the borough, for example by upgrading redundant railway lines and canal paths. Proximity and accessibility of new homes to local centres, places of work and public transport hubs will also be a factor to reduce reliance on cars and reduce business mileage when planning the location for new homes in the borough.

We will help increase the proportion of commuters walking, cycling or using public transport – 50% by 2030

### Behaviour change

We need residents to change aspects of their lives in order to make the energy savings. This ranges from home owners increasing their loft insulation to reduce heat loss, to learning how to maintain the temperature of a newly retrofitted home, to undertake more journeys by bicycle or on foot. Children now exert significant 'pester power' on their parents with 96% of Wigan Borough's schools now having an 'eco-badge'.

### New partnerships

Build on existing partnerships between public, private and voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. Engaging and educating residents, communities, businesses.

### New approaches to financing and funding

In partnership with Greater Manchester we are looking to develop new approaches to financing and incentivising greater energy efficiency while achieving our ambition to end fuel poverty through Council Tax, ECO funding and other financial vehicles. Some of the solutions, such as changing tax and revenue rules, largely reside with national government.



